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STREET & SMITH'S

LOVE STORY

EVERY WEEK MAGAZINE MAR.30 -1935

ILLUSTRATED

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Orchid Girl

By

PAULA ROCKWELL

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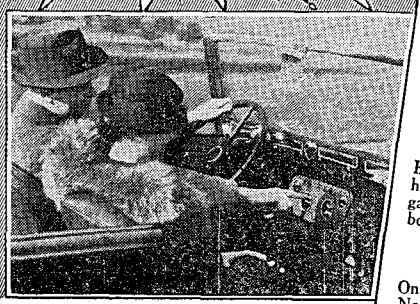

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I am amazed at Vacu-matic performance. It's giving me 5 more miles per gallon.—Walter Zielinski, Ill.

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NASH
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DODGE
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OLDSMOBILE
I am well pleased with Vacu-matic on our Oldsmobile. A test proved it to give 18 miles per gal. Before we considered 13 good. — Arthur Williams, N. Y.

Above are just a few of the many unsolicited letters received from Vacu-matic users.

VACU-MATIC

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the Carburetor Control that "BREATHES"

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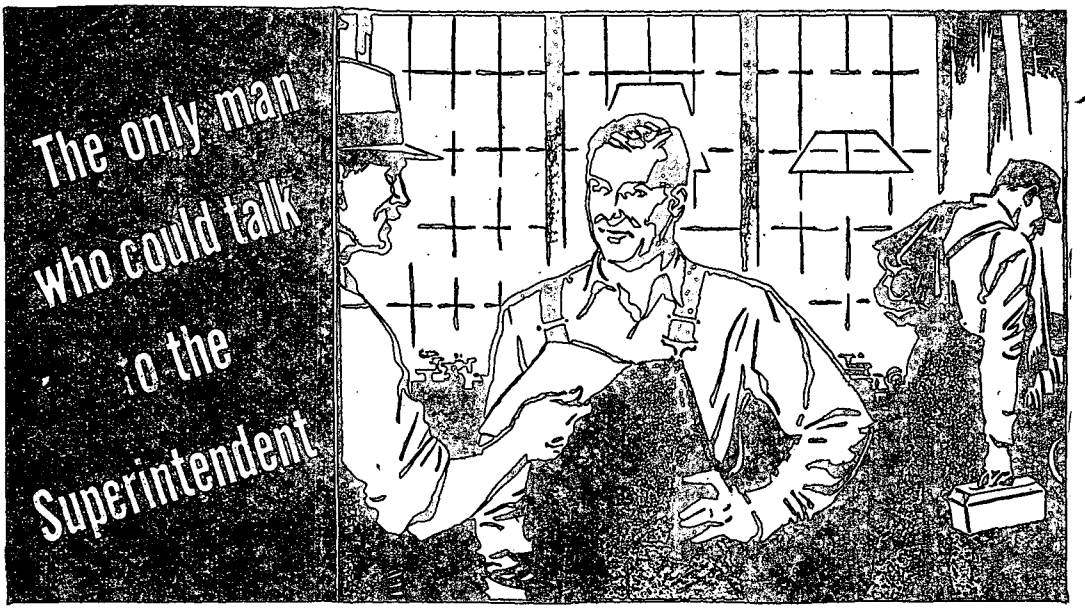

For several years, he was just like a score of other men in the plant—a good, honest, fairly capable worker, but only that. There was nothing distinctive about him or his ability—nothing to make him stand out from the crowd—no reason, as a matter of fact, why he should ever receive a raise.

Then one fortunate day he decided that the reason he wasn't getting anywhere was because he lacked special training. He searched around a bit—asked a great many questions—and then enrolled for a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools.

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Vol. CXIV EVERY WEEK No. 6

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"Too Reckless!"—Anne L. Kimball's serial, written especially for Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine—begins next week. You won't want to miss it.

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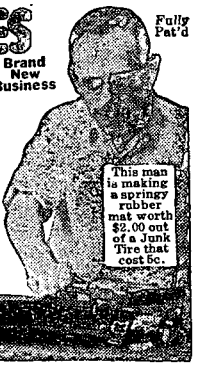

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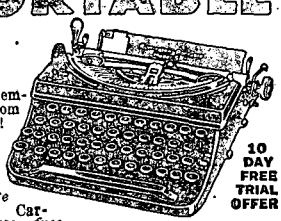

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31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15	32x4	2.95	0.85
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25	33x4	2.95	0.85
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25	32x4½	3.35	1.15
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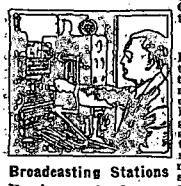

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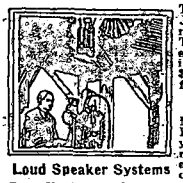

Loud Speaker Systems

Installation and service work is another growing, money making field for Radio trained men.

Clip the coupon and mail it. I'm so sure that I can train you at home in your spare time for a good job in Radio that I'll send you my first lesson free. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand. Then you will know why many men with less than a grammar school education and no technical experience have become Radio Experts and are earning two to three times their former pay as a result of my training.

Many Radio Experts make $40, $60, $75 a week

In less than 15 years, the Radio Industry has grown from a few million to hundreds of millions of dollars. Over 300,000 jobs have been created by this growth and thousands more will be created by its continued development. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you in the N. R. I. Course—have stepped into Radio at two and three times their former salaries.

Get Ready Now for Jobs Like These

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to $5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, buyers, for jobs paying up to $7,500 a year. Radio operators on ships enjoy life, see the world, with board and lodging free, and get good pay besides. Dealers and jobbers employ servicemen, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay up to $100 a week. My book tells you about these and many other interesting Radio jobs. There's opportunity for you in Radio. Its future is certain. Television, short wave, loud speaker systems, police Radio, automobile Radio, aviation Radio—in every branch, developments and improvements are taking place.

Many make $5, $10, $15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which quickly show you how to do Radio repair jobs common in most every neighborhood. Throughout your training, I send you information for servicing popular makes of sets! I give you plans and ideas that have made good spare time money—$200 to $1000 a year—for hundreds of fellows. My course is famous as "The Course that pays for itself."

Free 64-Page Book of Facts

Mail the coupon now. In addition to the sample lesson, I send my book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It tells you about the opportunities in Radio; tells you about my Course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. This offer is free to any ambitious fellow over 15 years old. Find out what Radio offers you without the slightest obligation. Mail Coupon in an envelope or paste it on a penny post card. ACT NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 5CD
Washington, D. C.

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J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 5CD
Washington, D. C.

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Help Your Kidneys

Don't Take Drastic Drugs

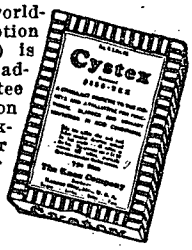
You have 9 million tiny tubes or filters in your kidneys, which are at work night and day cleaning out Acids and poisonous wastes and purifying your blood, which circulates through your kidneys 200 times an hour. So it's no wonder that poorly functioning Kidneys may be the real cause of feeling tired, run-down, nervous, Getting Up Nights, Rheumatic Pains and other troubles.

Nearly everyone is likely to suffer from poorly functioning Kidneys at times because modern foods and drinks, weather changes, exposure, colds, nervous strain, worry and over-work often place an extra heavy load on the Kidneys.

But when your Kidneys need help, don't take chances with drastic or irritating drugs. Be careful. If poorly functioning Kidneys or Bladder make you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Stiffness, Burning, Smarting, Itching Acidity, Rheumatic Pains, Lumbago, Loss of Vitality, Dark Circles under the eyes, or Dizziness, don't waste a minute. Try the Doctor's prescription Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex). See for yourself the amazing quickness with which it soothes, tones and cleans raw, sore irritated membranes.

Cystex is a remarkably successful prescription for poorly functioning Kidneys and Bladder. It is helping millions of sufferers, and many say that in just a day or so it helped them sleep like a baby, brought new strength and energy, eased rheumatic pains and stiffness—made them feel years younger. Cystex is swift, safe and sure in action. It helps the Kidneys in their work of cleaning out the blood and removing poisonous acids and wastes in the system. Cystex is a scientifically prepared prescription and your doctor or druggist can tell you it does not contain any dopes, narcotics or habit-forming drugs. The formula is in every package.

Because of its amazing and almost world-wide success, the Doctor's Prescription known as Cystex, (pronounced Siss-tex) is offered to sufferers of poor Kidney and Bladder functions under the fair-play guarantee to fix you up to your complete satisfaction or money back on return of empty package. It's only 3c a dose. Ask your druggist for Cystex today and see for yourself how much younger, stronger and better you can feel by simply cleaning out your Kidneys. Cystex must do the work or cost you nothing.



City Health Doctor Praises Cystex

Dr. W. R. GEORGE

Doctors and druggists everywhere approve of the prescription Cystex because of its splendid ingredients and quick action. For instance, Dr. W. R. George, graduate Medical Dept., University of Indiana, former Health Commissioner of Indianapolis, and Medical Director for insurance company 10 years, recently wrote the following letter:

"There is little question but what properly functioning Kidney and Bladder organs are vital to the health. Insufficient Kidney excretions are the cause of much needless suffering with aching back, weakness, painful joints and rheumatic pains, headaches and a general run-down, exhausted body. This condition also interferes with normal rest at night by causing the sufferer to rise frequently for relief, and results in painful excretion, itching, smarting and burning. I am of the opinion that Cystex definitely corrects frequent causes (poor kidney functions) of such conditions and I have actually prescribed in my own practice for many years past the same ingredients contained in your formula. Cystex not only exerts a splendid influence in flushing poisons from the urinary tract, but also has an antiseptic action and assists in freeing the blood of retained toxins. Believing as I do that so meritorious a product deserves the endorsement of the Medical Profession, I am happy indeed to lend my name and photograph for your use in advertising Cystex." Signed W. R. George, M. D.

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Illustration

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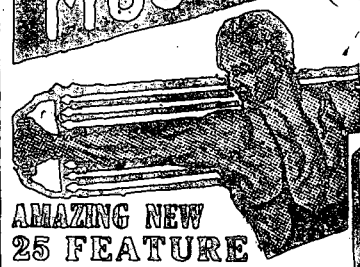

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MEDICAL authorities now say that millions of men over 40 suffer from disorder of one of the most important male glands—the prostate. After age 50, says one important writer, the chances are 2 to 1 that you have some prostate derangement.

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Do not hesitate. Send for this book now. You will also learn of a generous test offer now being made by the manufacturer of Thermalaid, to prostate gland sufferers. This test will prove the merit of Thermalaid in seven days, or you pay nothing! No obligation—just write today to **W. J. Kirk, President, The Electro Thermal Company, 7687 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio.** Western Address: Dept. 76-U, 500 Wm. Fox Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif.

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28x4.75-19	2.45	0.95
29x4.75-20	2.50	0.95
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.15
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25
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Size	Tires	Tubes
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33x4	2.95	0.85
34x4	3.25	0.85
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33x4½	3.45	1.15
34x4½	3.45	1.15
30x5	3.65	1.35
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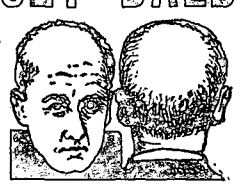

Full particulars of an amazing new discovery that enables people who have dandruff, scalp itch, falling hair or baldness, to harmlessly remove the thin outer layer of scalp skin, have fresh new scalp skin and activate the dormant roots to grow new hair. WILL BE SENT ABSOLUTELY FREE, to any reader of this magazine who will write to Dermolav Lab., Desk 727, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y. This FREE Treatise explains anatomy of your hair and tells what to do. It is positively amazing. If pleased, tell friends.

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Two in a Fog

By Gerry Ann Hale

SO you can see how impossible it all is," Rod finished jerkily, his eyes not quite meeting Melina's. "I thought you were——"

"Some one rich and important," she supplied dryly, and if you hadn't seen the hurt in her dark eyes, you might have thought it didn't matter that the man who had professed his undying love for her not two days ago was now backing out lamely.

She looked away from his hands, fumbling nervously with the tiny cup of after-dinner coffee. Outside the plate-glass window of the quiet side-street café, the first eddying wisps of fog circled about the street lamps. Inside, it was all warmth and soft light—and heartbreak.

"But can't you see what a fix I'm in?" he protested, his handsome face sullen and darkened. "I'm poor. I can't afford to get mixed up with a working girl."

Melina inwardly shrank from the harshness of his voice. There was no need of that.

She mused aloud, "Because I had the bridal suite on the *Empress*, you

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thought I was rich. Remember, I told you I had only been to Bermuda on business!"

He shrugged impatiently. "I thought you were kidding," he muttered.

There came the soft clatter of silver and china rising over the room, and from beyond the wide door, the muted clamor of traffic. Melina shivered and picked up her purse.

"Why did you see me again, then?" she demanded curiously. "It would have been easier to just—just not show up."

Rod's lips tightened, and for once he didn't look quite so handsome.

"How did I know what you might do?" he said callously.

Melina's smooth olive skin flushed darkly, and for a moment her lips trembled. Then they parted in a swift breath of anger.

"I can't forgive you for that!" She looked beautiful then, brilliant with fury, alive with suppressed emotion. "I may be one of those fools who work for a living, but I'm not cheap! If it had killed me, I should never have sought you out."

Her knees were lax with the fierceness of her anger, and for a moment it looked as if she couldn't move. Then she rose, leaning for a second on the table.

"You have nothing to fear from me," she told him bitterly. "From this moment on I don't know you, never knew you, never expect to know you!"

He was on his feet too, his face white, his lips curled.

"Which is O. K. with me," he muttered, just as a slim dark man with gray eyes under a shock of blue-black hair, strolled up to the table and said mildly:

"I see I'm just in time, Roddy my boy, to meet your charming dinner guest."

Rod turned his head jerkily, and Melina saw him falter and then look at her with a mingling of fear and annoyance. She read him correctly in an instant. This man who had just come up was some one important, and Rod hated to introduce them.

It brought her head up proudly, and her softly rounded chin took on a determined look.

"So sorry"—she moved a step away—"I must hurry."

But the gray-eyed man wasn't to be put off so easily.

He put out a detaining hand. "If you think I walked across this entire room just to speak to Rod Landers, you're terribly mistaken. And again, if you think I shall let you run off without being introduced, then you don't know Edward Erin O'Moore."

Rod broke in hastily, his voice almost fawning, Melina thought.

"How are you, old man? I'm just back from Bermuda——"

But Edward Erin O'Moore wasn't paying him one second's attention. From his considerable height, he was looking down at the averted outline of Melina's face.

"Now, what is your name?" he was demanding coolly. "I can't go on calling you 'lady' or 'lassie' all our lives."

Rod was trying to break into a situation that was rapidly growing into a twosome, with him very much on the outside. He cleared his throat and essayed speech, which again fell on deaf ears.

"I say, O'Moore——"

Melina lifted her eyes to the gray ones just over her head.

"My name is Melina Otis Spaulding, and I work for a living," she said bitterly, her glance drifting to Rod's suddenly scarlet face and then back to the gray-eyed man. She

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drew on her gloves slowly, knowing that if she hurried her hands would tremble furiously. "And now, if you will let me pass——"

"You may call me Erin," the gray-eyed man told her, as he fell into step beside her, leaving Rod with a bare nod of his head. "I rather like the name Melina. It's odd. Just a bit old-fashioned."

She was stumbling a little by then, because a sudden mist had come over her eyes. Erin O'Moore took her elbow lightly and guided her as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

He pushed the door open, and the damp cottony fog rolled to meet them. Somewhere on the way to the street, he had acquired a topcoat and a battered felt hat. And now while Melina hesitated blindly in the entrance, he pulled the coat on.

"Shall we walk a bit?" He had her arm again, this time gripped companionably tight to his side. "I like the feel of the fog—it's so dampish and clammy sometimes. Look at it against the lights!"

Slow, burning tears were seeping out from under Melina's long lashes; there seemed no way to stop them. They'd been gathering a long while—ever since Rod had told her brutally that their shipboard romance was ended almost before it had begun.

The man at her side sensed the tension. Across the café, he had seen enough in both pairs of eyes to understand.

"You may as well get it out of your system," he said casually, leading her across an intersecting street where red and green lights were just a colorful blur. "Talk or yell, it's the same to me. I've listened to both in my time."

Melina stiffened. She had almost forgotten that Erin O'Moore was there. She had been so immersed in her own misery.

She looked up at his profile, sharply cut against the drifting fog and thought how different he was from Rod. Rod had perfect features and a collar-ad smile. But this man, with his almost beaklike nose and twisted grin, had something Rod never would have—something hard to put one's finger on.

She said harshly, "Won't it spoil your chances or something if some one sees you walking with a working girl? Or is it that the fog will protect you?"

"Go on," he murmured equably. "It starts amazingly well."

Melina shivered and drew the fur collar higher about her chin.

"I'm sorry," she said thickly, "but I'm all in the air. I've just discovered that romance and the working girl doesn't mix, despite the *Cinderella* myth. The movies are all wrong—so are magazines and novels. Everything's all wrong!"

"Apple strudel!" he scoffed, and then stopped suddenly against a post that had appeared from the mist. "Shades of St. Patrick! I just missed carving my nose on that blasted post!"

They stood momentarily still, looking up at the dark outlines of the iron post. The fog had thickened to a soupy consistency.

"Didn't know New York could go London one better," Erin O'Moore muttered, listening to the continuous hooting of cars half stalled in the avenues. "We'd best get out of this for a while."

Melina frowned slightly, coming alive to the problem of the moment.

"Where are we? Have you any idea?"

He dropped her arm and shinned rapidly up the iron post before she could close her mouth. His voice

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came down from the mist above.

"We're practically on my home street." He slid down the post and wiped his hands with a large handkerchief. "Would you share my fireside and a high ball for an hour or so, lassie? Or do I look dangerous?"

Melina hesitated. She knew, no matter where they were then, that she was a long way from her one-room apartment overlooking the park. Rod had picked this café in which to dine, with an eye to its being out of the way.

"I'm not exactly a good companion tonight," she said restlessly. "I'd like to break dishes and things."

Then Erin O'Moore took her arm again and turned left into the side street that showed even darker than the avenue.

"Even that," he assured her placidly, "might be arranged. There's some old crockery in the kitchen that I'm tired of looking at. You'd be doing me a great favor if you'd break——"

And then Melina laughed—a faint bit of laughter, to be sure, but nevertheless it was a step onward.

"If you think I walked across this entire room just to speak to Rod Landers, you're terribly mistaken. And if you think I shall let you run off without being introduced, then you don't know Edward Erin O'Moore."

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"You're ridiculous."

"I made you laugh."

"Is that something to crow over?" She tried hard not to be bitter.

"Absolutely! It shows you aren't too far gone to be saved."

Then he led her into a low doorway, hospitably lighted by two old-fashioned iron lanterns inclosing electric bulbs. The warm coziness of a narrow entrance hall enveloped them, and the man led the way up long white steps to a high door set with brass knob and knocker.

"My domain!"—bowing low and ushering her into a high-ceilinged room that breathed of peace and comfort.

Melina dropped her coat on a red leather bench and looked appreciatively about. Dark woodwork and pale walls, lighted by ivory-shaded lamps that cast a subdued light over bookcases built in halfway to the ceiling; leather chairs and a fireplace; scatter rugs, worn and velvety; warm red drapes drawn over sheer window curtains and the gleam of brass here and there.

"Do you like it?" he asked eagerly. And looking at her eyes, he knew without words. "I'm glad," he added simply.

She sat down in front of the smoldering fire and stretched slim white hands toward the welcome warmth, while the man busied himself at the liquor cabinet.

"So you met Rod on the *Empress*," he began casually over his shoulder. Melina stiffened resentfully. "How do you like the ship? I've been on her once or twice."

She relaxed, feeling rather silly.

"I liked it at first," she admitted with a burst of honesty. "I work for the company and I had to do some business for them down there. That's why I had the bridal suite. It was the only cabin not sold."

Erin O'Moore came over with a glass for her. "So Rod thought you were at least Miss Empress," he ventured.

Melina nodded. She knew suddenly she was going to tell him everything. She couldn't help it.

"It was lovely while it lasted," she confessed thickly. "I'd never been flirted with so expertly before. He made the two days heavenly. I hated to get back to New York. Then——"

"He found out you weren't a banker's daughter! Right?"

"Right!" she told him flatly, and then lifted her glass. "A toast to the working girl!"

"May she discover that all men aren't alike," he added swiftly. And they drank in silence.

He sat down opposite her and stretched with a sigh of relief toward the heat.

"This is something like it"—tilting back his head and closing his eyes—"with the fog outside, and peace and a good companion inside!"

Melina relaxed under the spell of his voice. It was soothing, compelling in its very quietness. She found some of the misery stealing from her heart and soul. Everything except this room, this man, was far away and unreal.

Eyes closed, she let it all seep into her blood. And across the width of the hearth, Erin O'Moore watched her from under half-closed lids and wondered at the faint stirrings in his heart.

They were like this when there came the muffled sound of voices from below, then the clatter of feet and the sharp *tap-tap* of the knocker.

The man frowned with annoyance and sprang to his feet.

"Some pests, I suppose, to spoil a perfect evening," he groaned.

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He crossed the room slowly and flung open the door. Almost immediately, the air was filled with laughter and a feminine voice, followed by a familiar masculine one.

Melina turned her head automatically and looked straight into the amazed eyes of Rod!

"Edward Erin O'Moore!" A lovely red-haired girl in pale-green satin dropped an ermine coat carelessly on the floor to give both hands to the gray-eyed man. "You've treated me shamefully! Not a call, not a line, not a word——"

Her glance slipped past him and fixed itself sharply on Melina's frozen face. Something jealous and ugly flamed for a moment in the topaz eyes of the newcomer.

"Oh! I'm so sorry, darling," she purred, coming into the room, eyes frankly surveying Melina. "If we had known we were intruding——"

Erin O'Moore sauntered behind her. "Not at all, Jada my own. We're just hiding from the fog for a bit. This is Miss Spaulding—Miss van Dykerman." He looked obliquely at Rod, shifting uneasily in the background. "I believe you know Mr. Landers."

Melina smiled frostily. "No, I'm afraid not," she said clearly. "How do you do?"

Jada slid gracefully onto the hearth rug, the faint light from the fire making her hair sparkle, showing her skin to be even whiter than it appeared.

"It's the fog that brought us in," she explained, narrowing her eyes seductively at Erin O'Moore. "We were on our way to the Ritz and the taxi bumped into a post at the corner here. So here we are!"

Melina's nerves tingled from the tip of her head to the end of her little toe. Rod here in the same room! Handsome and poised now, he was leaning against the mantel.

"Hope you don't mind, old man," he was saying easily to Erin. "But Jada would have it that we drop in in on you."

"Guess I can stand it," Erin drawled, and Jada laughed as though he had complimented her.

Yet her eyes, when they sought Melina's, were cold and just a bit cruel.

"And who are you, darling?" she demanded brightly.

At the liquor cabinet, mixing drinks, Erin O'Moore paused and listened, his generous mouth grim.

Melina looked down at the other girl. At some other time, perhaps, she might have felt ill at ease facing an obvious society girl. But now, somehow, it was a matter of no importance.

"I'm a working girl," she said smoothly. "You should try it sometime. It's good for the figure."

Jada stiffened, and the smile wreathing her lips grew just a bit forced.

"I don't think my figure needs it," she cooed. "Do you think so, Erin?"

He came over with two tall glasses. "What, reducing?" He raised his brows. "Well, a bit off the waist might help."

Jada flushed darkly and drank half her high ball in a furious gust of anger.

Rod's eyes darkened and his lips, too, tightened in anger—anger at Melina. She caught him glaring at her when she lifted her eyes indifferently to his face.

"What's the matter, Mr. Landers," she asked coolly. "Did your drink go down the wrong way?"

Erin O'Moore laughed suddenly and went to turn on the radio.

"I think a bit of music might

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help," he chuckled into a tense silence.

The music that drifted so enchantingly into the room didn't help much. It served only to send Jada nearer Erin and left Rod uneasily trying to carry on a one-sided conversation with Melina.

Melina sipped her drink and gazed absent-mindedly into the dying fire. She was analyzing her feelings, sorting them out carefully and laying them at her feet.

Rod, after that first amazing moment when he had walked into the room, had done nothing to her heart except perhaps harden it a little. His obvious relief when she had accepted Erin O'Moore's introduction filled her with contempt. And again, his too obvious eagerness to be with Jada van Dykerman was overpoweringly offensive.

At this moment he was glancing uneasily at Jada, sitting on a stool at Erin's feet, resting her lovely white arms on his knees while she talked softly to him. Melina could see the impotence of his anger surging within him.

"What's the matter"—she glanced up at Rod carelessly—"is your big fish nibbling at another bait?"

He flushed angrily and turned his back on her.

"I say, Jada"—going to bend over the red-haired girl—"don't you think we could barge along? I imagine the fog has lifted a bit by now."

Erin got to his feet and glanced humorously across at Melina.

"I hope the fog is thinning out," he said innocently.

But when he went to draw aside the red drape, the fog was even worse. It clung thickly to the glass outside.

Erin whistled. "Looks worse," he muttered just as the radio, interrupting its dance program, issued a news bulletin.

"The police department is sending out a warning"—the voice of the announcer came with startling suddenness—"that all those who are indoors, remain there until the fog lifts somewhat. Right now, it is exceedingly dangerous in the streets. Already, there have been more than a score of fatal accidents."

"Oh!" Jada sighed ecstatically. "How delicious!"

"It is the worst fog ever to hit New York," went on the radio. "It is due to lift sometime in the early-morning hours. Until then——"

"What rotten luck!" Rod muttered under his breath and kicked a footstool out of his way.

Erin raised his crooked dark brows. "I should be the one to say that, me lad."

Melina was on her feet, staring in bewilderment at her host. "Then that means I can't leave yet?" she asked slowly.

Erin O'Moore shook his head, his eyes kindling suddenly. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to be your host for a few hours longer."

Jada tossed her head and slid her hand through his arm, taking his speech as a direct compliment to herself.

"You're absolutely precious, Erin darling. It's no wonder I love you so terribly," she purred.

But Erin slid just as easily away from her and crossed to a door opening into another room. "You love too easily, Jada me girl. 'Tis not the way of the Irish."

"Any one would think you'd been born over there," she pouted, "instead of in New York itself."

He disappeared into the other room and lights flashed on. A moment later he was back.

"There now, girls"—looking

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straight at Melina—"there's everything handy for you if you get tired and want to rest. There are clean sheets on the bed, clean towels on the rack, and pajamas, slightly big, but serviceable if you want to sleep."

Melina looked at the clock on the mantel. Why, it was almost midnight already! She should be in bed now, getting ready for to-morrow's work.

"I think, if you don't mind," she ventured, "I'll take a nap."

Erin came over and took her arm, his hand somehow compelling arrest.

"Is there any one you should notify?" he wanted to know quietly.

She shook her head, feeling something warm and comforting steal into her heart.

"No one at all."

She went into the other room just as Jada reached Erin again and drew his arm close about her waist.

"Can't you find a place for Rod to nap a bit?" she cooed. "Then you and I could talk."

Melina heard Erin O'Moore laugh softly just before she closed the door. And because it was the tolerant laugh of one who brushed away a persistent insect, Melina was somehow glad.

She looked about the bedroom. It was typically masculine—the dark furniture that was severe yet comfortable, the wide windows with tailored curtains, and off to one side, a sedate bath done in black and white.

Melina slipped off her dress and hung it carefully on a rack. Then she went into the bathroom to luxuriate in steaming hot water and faintly scented soap.

Later, feeling refreshed and ready for sleep, she entered the room to find Jada curled up on the foot of the bed, surveying her nails.

After a moment, she looked up and stared shrewdly at Melina. Then she smiled slightly.

"So you're a working girl," she murmured.

Melina disliked her intensely. She knew it definitely, now.

"Yes," she returned shortly, thinking how very beautiful the other girl actually was. In the mirror she could see her own reflection and to herself she looked plain and shiny-faced.

"I don't suppose you make an awful lot?" Jada went on. "I mean, you wouldn't turn up your nose at making a bit of extra money, would you?"

Faint alarm rang somewhere within Melina. She stood quite still and watched Jada through the glass.

"What do you mean?" she asked sharply.

Jada uncoiled herself and stood up. "If I made it worth your while, would you get out of here? No, I'll put it this way: Get out, and I'll make it worth your while." She looked at Melina boldly, challengingly. "And if you don't get out, well, it won't make much difference."

Melina brushed her hair mechanically while a string of bewildered thoughts rushed through her mind.

"What for?" she demanded bluntly. "Why should I risk breaking my neck in this fog?"

Jada drew in a sibilant breath, and her eyes were pieces of yellow flint.

"I don't know why I bother to explain," she said icily, as if Melina were too insignificant a person to address at all. "It just happens that I want to be alone with Mr. O'Moore, and you are in my way. Now, do you understand?"

Challenging yellow eyes glared at her insolently. But somehow, Melina wasn't much impressed.

"Oh," she drawled, "so that's the

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In an instant, Melina had her dress on and was fastening it up while Erin pushed open the door and peered in. "I've decided not to take a nap," she said. "I think I'll come in and keep you company."

way they do it on the avenue! Frame the man when you can't get him otherwise."

Jada gave a sudden furious scream. "Why, you cheap little——" She seemed about to leap at Melina, her gleaming nails curved for battle. But Melina's slim white hands reached out and gripped the other's narrow wrists, holding them away from her face.

For a long moment, she stared at her, disgust in her eyes.

"If you think," she began grimly, releasing her with a push that sent Jada stumbling back to the bed, "that I'll be a party to any scheme of yours for trapping Mr. O'Moore, you're crazy!"

Jada sat up, striving for nonchalance. "You're making a play for him yourself," she sneered.

Melina shrugged. "No, I'm not," she said slowly. "But now that you mention it, he is worth fighting for, isn't he? A charming person!"

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Jada stood up, her face ashily pale. "You keep away from him, do you hear me?" she cried, clenching her teeth desperately. "He's mine and no one else shall have him!"

Melina dreamily surveyed herself in the mirror. "He seemed to like me," she murmured. "He'd be so comfortable to live with——"

"Shut up!" Jada shrieked, and then a knock sounded on the door.

"Hello in there!" Erin O'Moore's voice came anxiously through. "What's all the noise about?"

In an instant, Melina had her dress on and was fastening it up while Erin pushed open the door and peered in. His eyes sought hers first and somewhere deep inside her, Melina was glad.

It was, she thought vaguely, getting to be a habit, feeling glad about Erin O'Moore.

"What's up?" he was asking, his eyes very intent, though his voice made his words of no consequence.

Melina went to him without looking at Jada. "Not a thing," she assured him. "Only, I've decided not to take a nap. I think I'll come in and keep you company."

Erin O'Moore grinned widely and bowed low. "The best news I've had since you decided to take a nap. Enter, lady fair."

Rod was standing by the window, scowling out at the fog. When Melina came in, he turned and directed his scowl at her. But she merely raised her brows maddeningly and strolled over to sit before the dead embers of the fire.

Her host followed, something brilliant yet soft glowing in his eyes. Standing over her, arms folded across his chest, he said simply:

"It took those minutes out of my sight to make me know."

Melina flushed hotly and then wondered why. Across the room, Rod cleared his throat loudly. But Erin went on as if they were alone: "I had begun to wonder about myself and you. For some reason you drew my eyes clear across the café to-night. I couldn't eat with the same appetite afterward." He stopped, and his eyes searched her face intently.

Melina stirred restlessly. She felt strange, taken up out of herself. Something of what this man felt entered her blood.

"We're strangers," she murmured. "You know nothing of me."

He flung up his head. "Do any of us ever truly know one another? Even after years of living together?"

She mused on that, remembering things she had heard. "They say that——"

"That there is no such thing as love at first sight," he put in quickly. "Perhaps there isn't." His eyes held hers. "But whatever this is I feel for you, if it isn't love, it might just as well be because——"

Jada's voice issuing from the bedroom interrupted him, and Melina was conscious of quick resentment. She had to hear more!

"Rod! Come here, will you?" Jada called and Rod, with a muttered excuse, disappeared into the other room and closed the door.

Erin shrugged. "A lovely couple!"

Melina smoothed her skirt carefully. "You were saying?" she prompted casually—too casually.

And in an instant, Erin O'Moore was kneeling at her feet so that he could look up into her eyes, his whole face lit up with tenderness, his hands strong and steady on hers.

"Then you aren't exactly bored?" he asked gently. "Even if you don't believe in love at first sight?"

Melina took a deep breath. It was becoming difficult to breathe the way she should. It was being so

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close to him, she thought. The strength of him flowing out robbed her of sane reasoning.

"I—I didn't say I didn't believe in it," she stammered a little. "It's just—— Well, after all, we've never seen each other before."

He lifted her hands one by one and kissed them, his lips lingering warmly on their coolness. And his eyes never once left her face.

"I'm not rushing you," he told her. "I'm just warning you that you may as well start thinking of me, because one day soon you'll have to make up your mind."

Nowhere a sound, save the low murmur of his voice and the steady ticking of a clock. And then, breaking the moment wide in two, came Rod's voice. And this time he called Melina!

He stood in the door of the bedroom. "I wonder if you'd come in and help Jada?" he asked politely. "She doesn't feel so well."

Melina, even while she moved to go into the room, wondered. There was something distinctly peculiar about this.

Erin raised his brows inquiringly. "Something more?" he muttered under his breath.

Melina passed Rod and saw Jada lying across the bed, her face buried in her arms. She went over and asked:

"What's the matter? What can I do?"

Jada rolled over and sighed. "Some water I think!"

Melina glanced at Rod, who had closed the bedroom door behind her. Then she went into the bathroom and got a glass. The sound of the water running must have deadened the sound of Rod's steps, for without even the faintest warning, Melina looked up and saw him in the bathroom door.

"Listen, Melina, we've got to talk," he said urgently, something of his old fascination gleaming in his eyes. He had looked like this on the *Empress*, Melina thought remotely—eager and in love.

"There's nothing more to say," she said thinly. "That's all over and done with."

He came further in and half shut the door. "It can't be over—not the way I feel about you."

She stood backed against the glass-inclosed shower. "What's gotten into you?"

"I love you! That's what it is!" He took a long step that brought him to her side. "I'm mad about you. It doesn't matter if you aren't rich. Nothing matters except our love."

"Our love?" She evaded his hands and stepped back of the wash bowl. "Tell me when to laugh," she added bitterly.

He was so handsome—handsome and weak and shallow. Melina saw him clearly in an ugly light. And what she saw she didn't like.

"Come with me now," he begged. "Let's go to my place where we can be alone. I've so much to say."

Slowly she shook her head. "If every word you uttered was worth ten dollars, you couldn't give me two cents."

He flushed darkly and bit his lips. "I can make you change your mind," he warned sulkily. "We're all alone in here, you know."

Then Melina knew what the trick had been. Jada was probably paying Rod well to keep her out of the way while she worked on Erin!

Even as she thought it, a scream rang out from the other room. Melina started, but Rod barred her way.

"It's only Jada doing her stuff."

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Melina went into the room and looked swiftly about. There stood Jada. Melina said dryly, "You may as well put on your dress, Miss van Dykerman. The object of your affections has neglected to remain."

He grinned unpleasantly. "Erin O'Moore will be glad to do whatever she says when she gets through putting on her act. Clever, isn't she?"

Melina reached for the glass she had put down, filled it calmly with water and then before Rod knew what she was up to, flung it squarely in his face. And while he yelled and blinked in the sudden deluge, she was around him and into the bedroom.

It took only a moment to cross to the living room, and then, standing in the door, she looked swiftly about. There was Jada standing open-mouthed in the center of the floor, staring wildly about.

Melina stared, too. There was no Erin O'Moore—no one at all there except the two of them.

Melina said dryly, "You may as well put on your dress, Miss van

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Dykerman. The object of your affections has neglected to remain."

Jada whirled to face the door.

"Oh! You—you little——" she screamed, just as a thundering knock sounded on the door and an authoritative voice demanded:

"Open in the name of the law!"

Melina looked questioningly at Jada. "Shall I, or will you do the honors?"

Jada grabbed up her dress and flung it about her shoulders. Then she flounced into the bedroom.

Melina crossed to the door and flung it open on two policemen.

"What's going on in here?" the first one growled. "We heard a woman yelling."

Melina raised her eyebrows. "Really?" She seemed amazed. "You must have made a mistake in the house, officer. No one screamed in here." She stepped back from the door invitingly. "You may come in if you wish and look around."

The first officer looked at the second, who shrugged.

"Well"—the spokesman touched his cap—"we won't come in, but we won't be far away in case it comes again. We ain't taking chances to-night, what with the fog and all."

Melina closed the door behind them and leaned weakly against it for a moment.

"Get out of my way!" Jada sailed into the room, her dress on again. And behind her stalked Rod, uncomfortably wet and angry.

He refused to even look at Melina, going straight for his hat and coat and flinging them on hastily. Jada threw her ermine about her shoulders and tossed her head.

"Are you coming, Rod?" she demanded harshly. Together, they marched through the door.

Melina was alone then in the quiet room—alone and wondering. What had happened to Erin O'Moore?

"Psst!" A faint hissing drew her attention to a corner near the windows that was in deeper shadow than the rest of the room.

"Who—what—who's there?" she called nervously, beginning already to back away toward the door.

"Are we alone?" It was Erin O'Moore's voice! And while she looked around, he stepped from behind one of the red drapes, his black hair more tousled than ever, and a devilish twinkle in his eyes.

"Glory be!" he laughed softly, coming over to her. "To think that a son of Ireland should find himself running away—hiding from a slip of a girl!"

Melina dropped suddenly into the nearest chair, conscious of a strange weakness about her legs.

"I think," she said weakly, "I'm going to faint."

He was at her side in an instant, sober, anxious. "Darlin', don't do that. I didn't mean to frighten you. Come, look at me."

Her head slid to his shoulder as if it had the right to be there. And when she lifted her lashes, she could look right into his eyes.

"What happened?" she wanted to know wonderingly.

His eyes twinkled again. "Jada pulled a beautiful scene, worthy of a better cause. All about love and how no one would get me—you know the sort of thing." Melina nodded. "And when she started pulling off her things, well, I just disappeared."

A tiny chuckle began to ripple up in Melina's throat. "You should have seen her face when I came in!"

He was serious then, his eyes somber. "What did Rod do to you in there? I heard no sound."

Melina edged away from him.

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"He tried to sell me an old yarn that wasn't worth a moment's consideration."

Erin O'Moore studied her eyes at length. "Sure of that?"

Very slowly, very seriously, Melina nodded. "Very sure."

He sighed abruptly and drew her to her feet.

"It's time to be walking home now," he said, his arms slipping easily across her shoulders. "I have much to say to you, and I dare not say it here. It is too easy to love you."

His eyes dreamed down into hers and somehow her heart rose lightly to answer.

She smiled at him tenderly.

"Do you think," he asked wistfully, "there is a chance for me?"

For answer, Melina reached up and drew his head down. And then she kissed him lightly on both cheeks. He reached out for her convulsively and then with main effort, drew back his arms.

"If I touch you now," he said thickly, adoringly, "I'll never let you go!"

Her arm slid about his neck swiftly. "I'm thinking," she whispered amazingly, "that I won't want to go."

He held her with fierce tenderness, cradling her close, his lips tasting the sweetness of hers, lingering on her cheek, her eyes, her hair. They remained so, until finally an alien note sounded from the dim, outer world—the clatter of milk bottles.

"It is time, my sweet, to go home now." He held her aside with one arm, and reached for her coat with the other. "But later—nine o'clock to be exact—we have an engagement at the Municipal Building. Am I right, colleen?"

"Always right, dearest," Melina sighed dreamily from his shoulder.

WINTER SALE

FOR sale: a castle hill with many halls
Done up in oak and willow, with a stream
Furnished in newest fern and crystal walls
And small carillons where its pebbles dream.

Great lawns completely round it, to insure
A rest for Gypsy nightingales and those
Grave bands of fiddling crickets that endure
The longest march to serenade a rose!

In beautiful condition, clean and neat
From blue spruce turrets to each velvet floor,
Equipped with star-glow light and sun-warm heat—
And recommended most especial for

All wandering friends of June beneath the sky,
And every smiling April passing by!

BERT COOKSLEY.

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Young And Beautiful

By Jo Franklin

BEVERLY, standing on the balcony outside the hotel room, sighed at the loveliness of the night. The moon was painting a silvery, dancing path on the lake's dark surface. Soft strains of music floated up from below. And somewhere, down there, was that handsome, dark-eyed young man whose name she did not even know.

She turned her head and called: "Aren't you ready yet, mother? The dancing in the grill has commenced."

"Just a minute more, darling."

Beverly left the balcony and entered the room where her mother sat at the dressing table, fastening a rope of pearls about her throat.

"Mother, be sure to have that

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necklace put in the hotel safe tonight," reminded Beverly. "You forgot to, last night, and I was so nervous I couldn't sleep."

"You worry too much," said Mrs. Fenwick gayly. "Don't forget that these pearls are insured for fifty thousand dollars."

"Yes, mother, but a robbery wouldn't be funny. And you're so careless about picking up new acquaintances."

"Oh, stop lecturing, Beverly! Speaking of new acquaintances—after dinner, the hotel hostess introduced me to that distinguished-looking man we noticed in the dining room. His name is Luis Sebastian. He's very charming. And what do you think he said to me?"

"That he thought you and I looked like sisters, instead of mother and daughter," answered Beverly promptly.

"How did you ever guess?"

"Good heavens, mother, don't people say it wherever we go?" Beverly asked, somewhat mournfully.

"Well, yes, they do," smiled Mrs. Fenwick, with a pleased look at her reflection.

The glass mirroring their images testified that Mrs. Fenwick and her nineteen-year-old daughter did indeed look like sisters. Beverly's figure was no slenderer in her white evening gown than her mother's in a blue one. Mrs. Fenwick's hair, due to daily treatment, was an even more lustrous gold than that of her daughter. The mother's eyes were a light blue, while Beverly's eyes shaded toward violet.

Both had the gorgeous complexions that go with such fair coloring, both were beautiful. Mrs. Fenwick's beauty was doll-like and dainty, compared with the healthy, glowing attractiveness of her daughter.

"Really, Mr. Sebastian is very interesting," Mrs. Fenwick went on. "He has traveled all over the world, and he's a delightful talker. And, oh, by the way, I also met that athletic-looking young man."

"Which one do you mean?" Beverly spoke calmly, but her heart gave a queer little flipflop of anticipation.

"You know—the only other attractive man in the hotel. The quiet one who's been sitting shyly on the porch, reading. His name is Gordon Larrimore. What do you say, Beverly, we go down now, gather him and Mr. Sebastian in, and hint that they take us to the grill for dancing?"

"Mother!" Beverly was partly thrilled, partly apprehensive. "Please don't ask them, outright."

"Of course not!" laughed Mrs. Fenwick. "Leave it to me to be subtle. And stop looking so worried. Sometimes I feel you're ten years older than I."

Beverly, selecting a wrap, sighed. She felt the same way. Her mother seemed so irresponsible. It was nice to have a young, beautiful mother, but sometimes she envied other girls. Girls who had stout, middle-aged mothers with graying hair—mothers who were not always surrounded by fascinated young men, who did not eclipse their shy young daughters.

Beverly was not unsympathetic with her mother's keen enjoyment of being youngish and sought-after. She knew that Mrs. Fenwick, married when very young to a man twenty years her senior, had for years led a dull existence. It was only several years ago that, left a widow with a good income, she had really blossomed out and begun to enjoy life.

Because of her earlier repression,

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Mrs. Fenwick now craved gayety in deep gulps. She wanted to make up for the lost years of youth; she reveled in the admiration of younger men. Beverly often squirmed uncomfortably, feeling that her mother was a bit too frivolous, especially when enlivened by an extra cocktail. She lived in constant dread of Mrs. Fenwick's becoming too foolish over some romantic youth.

Fifteen minutes after they went down to the lobby, due to skillful maneuvers on Mrs. Fenwick's part, mother and daughter were seated in the grill. With them were Gordon Larrimore and Luis Sebastian.

While her mother chattered gayly, Beverly quietly studied the two men. Both had dark hair, but Gordon's was dark-brown and crisp, while Sebastian's was dark and sleek. Sebastian's eyes were black and penetrating. Gordon's were hazel and had a glint of humor in them. Sebastian might be the handsomer, but she preferred Gordon's bronzed, broad-shouldered good looks.

As the orchestra struck up, both men turned to ask Mrs. Fenwick for the first dance. Beverly was used to that. She was delighted to see her mother choose Sebastian as a partner. She felt a sense of delicious contentment as she and Gordon glided out upon the dance floor.

His first words, however, robbed the moment of its pleasure.

"You have a very beautiful mother," he observed. His eyes were following Mrs. Fenwick and Sebastian.

"You thrill me," answered Beverly. "Do you always say such charming things?"

He looked a trifle confused as he met her gaze.

"Well, I was about to add that you greatly resemble her. In fact, when I first saw you together, I thought——"

"That we were sisters?" finished Beverly. "You're only the nine hundred and fiftieth man to say that."

His eyes twinkled. She felt that he perceived her inner exasperation. "Then I'm not being very original, am I? I might as well say all the usual things. How do you like it here at this quiet lake resort?"

"There's lots to do," she told him. "Boating, swimming, riding, tennis. How are you at those things?"

"Only fair," he replied. "Sounds too energetic for one who has come from an office for a few days' rest."

She felt chagrined. His whole appearance suggested a love of the outdoors. The average young man would have eagerly sought her company in a round of sports. Why did he evade her?—she wondered. Her heart sank at the thought that perhaps his interest was all for her fascinating mother.

Her suspicions were borne out by the alacrity with which he asked Mrs. Fenwick for the following dance. For the next hour, he and Sebastian alternated in dancing with mother and daughter. Beverly had the all-too-familiar sensation of being an outsider at the party. Her vivacious mother dominated the scene and claimed most of the two men's attention.

"You're so silent to-night, Beverly," remarked Mrs. Fenwick, during an interval between numbers. "I have a very quiet daughter, gentlemen. She throws the whole burden of conversation on me."

"She is listening to you and learning," declared Sebastian, with an arch glance. "And she is a lucky girl, to have such a charming instructress."

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Beverly decided that she could not endure to watch Gordon acting like other young men who had fallen under her mother's spell. "I have a headache," she announced. "If you'll excuse me, I'll go to my room."

"Flatterer!" said Mrs. Fenwick, who loved compliments. "Don't Europeans say the sweetest things, Mr. Larrimore?"

Gordon smiled at her. "Who wouldn't, with you as an inspiration, Mrs. Fenwick?"

Her mother beamed with pleasure, and Beverly decided that she could stand no more. She rose from the table. She could not endure to watch Gordon acting like other young men who had fallen under her mother's spell.

"I have a headache," she announced. "If you'll excuse me, I think I'll take a stroll in the garden before going to my room."

The men rose politely, and her eyes met those of Gordon. His were regretful, and for a fleeting second she fancied he was about to accompany her. Then his gaze dropped, and she left the room alone. There were tears of vexation—and something deeper than vexation—in her eyes.

Beverly breakfasted alone the next morning. She liked to go for a canter before the sun was high.

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Mrs. Fenwick seldom arose before ten o'clock.

As she was leaving the dining room, Beverly met Gordon coming in. His eyes widened at sight of her in her trim white riding habit. She looked her charming, youthful best, and she knew it.

He stammered a "Good morning," and added, "You're really dazzling, Miss Fenwick, if you don't mind my saying so."

"I don't. She smiled wickedly. "You're complimentary to mothers and daughters both, I see. How do you get on with grandmothers?"

He looked taken aback at her sarcasm. Then his jaw squared grimly. "Oh, I'm a riot in an old ladies' home. Would you like to hear my memoirs sometime?"

"Of course," she returned. "Some rainy day, by the fireside. And you can wear your slippers and relax."

Then she went out to where the groom stood with her horse. Mounting, she galloped along the bridle trail that circled the lake. The fresh morning air brightened her eyes and stung vivid color into her cheeks. It would have been perfect, if Gordon had been riding with her.

She kept remembering the baffled look on his face. Her gibes had hurt him. Well, if she could hurt him, perhaps he was not indifferent to her. There had been undisguised admiration in his eyes, too, no doubt of that.

But the glow induced by these thoughts vanished two hours later, as she rode back to the hotel. She heard the gay voices of approaching riders through the trees. Her mother galloped into sight, and riding with her were Gordon and Sebastian.

Beverly smilingly returned the greetings of her mother and Sebastian. But her face froze a little as she met Gordon's pleasant smile.

"So you finally tottered out into the sunshine?" she said, as if addressing a white-bearded old man.

This time he refused to look hurt. He reined in. "Come along with us," he invited, "and I'll race you five miles, little one."

"No, thanks," she declined; "you might collapse and not be able to play checkers to-night."

A spark leaped into his eyes. "Look out. I might take the prerogative of the elders you class me with, and give you the spanking you need."

She laughed tantalizingly, happy to see him stung by what she had said.

"It isn't that I class you with my elders," she returned. "It's that you can't tear yourself away from them. And it's beginning to get you. You're aging, right before my eyes."

As he started to reply, an impulse of deviltry seized her. Raising her riding crop, she brought it down sharply on his horse's flank. The startled animal bolted, giving him plenty to do to manage it. Looking after him, she saw by the way he got the mount under control that he was an accomplished horseman.

She rode back to the hotel, wondering what had possessed her to act like that. Was it love? Was it love that made her so exasperated at Gordon that she felt she hated him, yet wanted to be in his arms? Did love make you so wistful and unhappy, and yet so thrilly inside of you?

After lunch, Beverly arranged to have a canoe held for her at the landing. She hoped that Gordon would see her embarking. Perhaps it was this thought that led her to don her most becoming—and daring—bathing suit.

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To her joy, Gordon was standing on the side porch as she went toward the landing. She pretended not to see him until he hailed her.

"Not going swimming in that icy lake, are you?"

Pausing, she looked up. She had seen the eyes of many men widen with keen admiration at sight of her in a bathing suit. But to see such a look on his face fairly made her tingle.

"I'm going to paddle my own canoe," she said. "That is, unless I can find a strong man to help me. How'd you like to ship on a voyage around the lake?"

"I'm awfully sorry." A deepening warmth of sincerity was in his tone. "But I've promised to make a fourth at bridge with Mr. Sebastian, your mother, and another lady."

"Oh!" She caught her breath, and again exasperation swept over her. If his eyes really meant what they said, why was he always at her mother's side?

"Better be careful," she advised him mockingly. "You'll be tired out, lifting those heavy cards. I don't know how you stand the pace!"

He glared down at her. "It isn't only your canoe that needs paddling," he growled. For a moment she thought he was going to vault the railing and carry out his threat.

Then he glanced out over the lake, and his expression changed. "Lots of whitecaps on the water. Don't you think it's too choppy to go canoeing?"

"Maybe, for bridge players," Beverly retorted. "But I don't think so."

She swung on her heel and walked away, disappointed that he called no reply after her. As she started paddling from shore, she could see him on the porch, watching her. Then he went inside. During the next two hours, he reappeared at intervals, no doubt when he was dummy. She derived some satisfaction from believing that he was following her with his eyes.

Pride alone kept her on the lake after the first half hour. The water was choppy, and the wind had a knifelike edge. But she felt that to go ashore would be admitting that Gordon had been right.

Presently the wind increased, and she decided to turn back. She veered too sharply, however, letting the canoe's bow leap out of the water. The swirling waves rushed under it, and Beverly found herself in the lake with the canoe capsized.

The water was icy-cold, but after she caught her breath she was not alarmed. She was an excellent swimmer. About to start for shore, she glanced toward the hotel. There on the porch stood Gordon's familiar figure. Knowing that she was clearly visible to him, she sent out a long, piercing scream.

She saw him leap the railing and run to the landing. There he removed his coat, kicked off his shoes, and dived into the lake. As he cut through the water toward her with long, strong strokes, she perceived that he was an exceptionally good swimmer.

Nearing the capsized canoe to which she clung, he blinked the water from his eyes and called hoarsely: "Miss Fenwick! Beverly! Are you all right?"

"Never better," she responded cheerfully. "It was nice of you to swim out and visit me."

She smiled gayly at him. His face grew grim as, treading water, he stared at her.

"You don't seem to need help," he

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said ominously. "What was all the screaming for?"

"I wanted to see if you'd leave your bridge game," she asserted. "Now that you're here, I'll race you back to shore."

For answer, he lunged toward her. The next moment Beverly was grasped in his strong arms, placed face down against the overturned canoe, and spanked twice, stingingly.

Spluttering, gasping when he released her, she faced him, her eyes blazing. She felt outraged and humiliated.

"I hate you!" she cried. "How dared you do that to me?"

"You asked for it, and you got it," he answered. His face was calm now, and his eyes friendly and warm. "Now let's get back to land."

"I'll go back by myself!" she cried. Go away and let me alone, you brute!"

"I'm going with you," he announced resolutely.

If the water had not been so icy, Beverly would have remained there obstinately. But she was becoming chilled. She struck out for shore at her fastest pace, hoping to outdistance him. To her irritation, he kept at her side with ease.

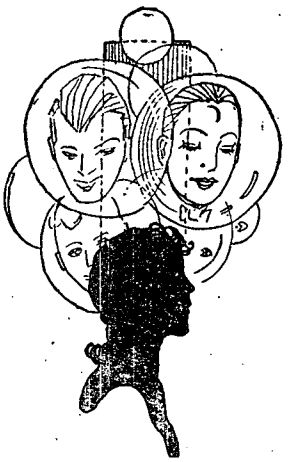
Halfway to the landing, her limbs began to grow leaden. Her body went numb, and her head felt dizzy. She turned a puzzled, helpless look toward Gordon. He swam closer to her. His brawny arm went across her shoulders, and she sighed. Then she lost consciousness.

When she opened her eyes, Gordon was lowering her gently into her bed. Behind him she glimpsed the anxious face of her mother and the countenance of the hotel physician.

"I'm sorry," she whispered weakly to Gordon.

He smiled softly and let his hands come away from her slowly, reluctantly. Then he stepped aside for the doctor.

Beverly emerged from the escapade with nothing worse than a severe cold. She was forced to keep to her room for the rest of the week. Ordinarily this would have been hard enough on her active temperament. Now it meant not seeing Gordon, and that made it ten times worse.



He sent her a large bouquet of flowers, and she was thrilled almost to tears. There was no florist at the resort. She realized that he must have plucked those wild flowers after hours of tramping about the slopes. They wilted in a day, but she would not have them thrown out. His flowers!

After dining in her room several nights later she announced: "Mother, I feel well enough to go downstairs this evening. In fact, I could stand a couple of hours of dancing."

"Splendid, my dear!" enthused Mrs. Fenwick. "And it will be a great relief to me if you'll take Gordon Larrimore off my hands for once. He trails me everywhere I go, and I haven't had five minutes alone with that fascinating Mr. Sebastian."

"Really!" said Beverly faintly. Her mother had no idea how her words tore at the girl's heart. So he was still pursuing her mother!

"Of course, I'm flattered by his

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attentions," Mrs. Fenwick rattled on. "He and Sebastian are both handsome, both interesting——"

"And both years younger than you, especially Gordon," finished Beverly. "I hope you're not taking either of them seriously."

"There you go, always reminding me of my age!" her mother pouted. "Other people don't think I'm as ancient as you do, Beverly. I'm only five or six years older than Luis Sebastian, and I don't look it. Sometimes I think you're jealous because men seem to prefer my beauty!"

"I'm not jealous, mother," Beverly protested. Nevertheless, she felt a twinge of conscience. She never had been jealous until Gordon appeared. "But I wish you'd become interested in older men, like our lawyer, who has adored you for years. I'm always afraid you'll get silly over some young man, and then——"

Her voice trailed off. Mrs. Fenwick burst into tears.

"You begrudge my having any fun in life. I'll be old soon enough. I think it's horrid of you, Beverly."

Beverly sighed. Her mother was just like a child.

"I'm sorry, mother. Let's forget it," she said, putting her arms about the older woman affectionately. All such scenes inevitably ended with Beverly apologetic and remorseful.

Mrs. Fenwick, dabbing at her eyes, took advantage of her daughter's softened mood.

"Darling, do something for me, won't you? We're leaving to-morrow, so this is the last night I can spend with Luis."

"What can I do?" asked Beverly wonderingly.

"You can get rid of Gordon for me. When you see him in the lobby, tell him I'm staying in my room for the evening. Then I'll phone Luis's room, and we'll steal away to the Lakeside Casino for a few dances."

Beverly hesitated, and her mother, reading her thoughts, urged her: "Please, dear! I'll enjoy it so. I'll probably never see him again, and I promise not to drink more than two cocktails."

"All right, mother, I'll do it," promised Beverly. She felt a certain pleasure in the thought that, though she did not relish the deception, it would enable her to have Gordon to herself for a last few hours.

He was not in the lobby when Beverly stepped from the elevator. Sebastian was there, however.

"You are charming this evening, Miss Fenwick," he said, bowing. His gaze traveled over her lithe form in its close-fitting gown of jade green. "You are like a goddess of the dance, all green and gold."

Beverly smiled coldly. She did not like his bold eyes. They made her feel creepy.

"Mother has not come down yet," she informed him abruptly. "She is still in her room."

He smirked complacently, as if there were some secret understanding between them. Then he bowed and left the lobby.

A moment later Gordon sauntered in. Her heart leaped at his approach.

"Being confined to your room has improved your looks, if that were possible." He smiled. "Golden hair—green gown—blue eyes reflecting the green—I call it bewitching!"

Where Sebastian's compliments had repelled her, Gordon's words caused her to glow with inner happiness.

"You're looking quite fit yourself," she said. "How you stand up

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under bridge and other indoor athletics, I don't know!"

"Are you going to start that again?" he groaned. His eyes went past her to the elevators. "How is your mother this evening?"

This query set Beverly's teeth on edge. "And are you going to start that? Now suppose I ask about your parents? Then we'll inquire after each other's grandparents, and settle down to a cozy chat about the Civil War."

"You're a brat!" he muttered. But there was a touch of embarrassment in his manner that made her take pity on him.

"Mother asked me to tell her public that she will stay in her room this evening," she told him, keeping as close to the truth as possible.

"Really?" His face lighted with apparent relief. It puzzled her.

"That was her message. Can I help you to kill a lonely evening at dominoes or checkers?"

Instead of being annoyed, he broke into laughter.

"You have a lovely sense of humor. I like it," he asserted. "Let's declare a truce and go down to the grill and dance."

"Fine!" she accepted enthusiastically.

They danced until near midnight. The hours passed like a roseate, rapturous dream to Beverly. At last she had Gordon all to herself! He proved a delightful companion—a perfect one, she thought. For she was gloriously, completely in love with him, and she admitted it to herself without reservation.

And it seemed to her that his feeling toward her was more than casual. A man reveals so much when he looks in a certain way at a girl, keeps his eyes on her alone, trembles when his hand touches hers. As the evening wore on, they became a little graver, a little shyer with each other, as if deep emotions were surging within them.

"Let's take a turn in the air," he suggested finally.

They went out to the terrace and around to the deserted porch of the hotel. An intimate silence fell between them as they gazed out over the moonlit waters of the lake.

"I wonder what is at the end of that moonglade," Beverly mused at last. "Is it like a rainbow, do you think?"

He looked at the long path of silver stretching to the horizon. "No. There's no pot of gold there. I'll tell you what I think: If we could reach the moonglade's end, we'd find the answer to our dreams. What would yours be?"

She met his glance, intently challenging.

"I hope you won't laugh," she said. "What I'd want to find there would be just a home."

"Just a home?" He stared in surprise.

"Yes. It needn't be a big one, nor a grand one. But a home, a real home. You see, mother and I travel from hotel to hotel. She loves it, but I'm deathly tired of it. So I dream of a home of my own."

She was really afraid he might be amused. But he looked at her with deepening approval, and his voice was tender when he spoke.

"I like that," he declared. "A home! But wouldn't you want some one to share it with you, Beverly?"

He was gazing intently at her. A strange timidity assailed her, and she could not raise her eyes to his. How could she let him read what was so plainly written there?

"You're asking too many questions," she parried. "Suppose you answer one. What dream would you

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She clutched at his arm almost frantically. "Gordon, I don't understand you!" she cried. "What can it matter to you if my mother is out with Luis Sebastian?" But Gordon freed his arm and ran to his car.

hope to find answered at the end of the moonglade?"

It was his turn to display a sort of shyness.

"The answer to my dream?" His voice was hesitant, but vibrant with rising emotion. "Well——"

A sudden gust of wind came from the lake, and Beverly pulled her wrap closer about her. His hands went out to help her. She felt his fingers trembling at her shoulders as his hands hovered, reluctant to draw away. Almost insensibly she swayed toward him. Then his arms went about her, and he drew her to him and held her close.

She raised her eyes to his, and then, swiftly, crushingly, his lips were on hers. He kissed her again and again, as though he could never have enough. She returned his kisses, afloat in a warm sea of languorous delight, athrill with the con-

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tented rapture of love given and returned.

At last, breathless, she drew back with a smile and a faint shake of her head. Now she wanted to have him speak, to put his endearments into words.

He gazed down at her, his eyes melting into hers.

"That's the answer to my dreams, darling," he began. "You in my arms, and——"

Footsteps behind them made him pause. Beverly drew away from him as some one came up the steps. It was the young assistant manager of the hotel.

"Oh, good evening, Miss Fenwick," he murmured. "And, Mr. Larrimore, how are you?"

He looked fully as embarrassed as they over having interrupted their tête-à-tête. Trying to ease the situation, he paused and turned just before he entered the lobby.

"I saw that charming mother of yours at the casino," he said to Beverly. "She was certainly enjoying herself."

Then he left them, blissfully ignorant of having hurled a verbal bombshell.

Gordon's manner underwent a complete change. He looked at Beverly accusingly, his brows knitting together. "I thought you said your mother was staying in her room?"

"That's what she wanted me to say," explained Beverly. "But, instead, she went to the Lakeside Casino with——"

"With Sebastian!" he burst out, and she nodded, wondering at his vehemence. Then, to her greater astonishment, he started across toward the steps.

Bewildered, she clutched at his arm almost frantically.

"Gordon, I don't understand you!" she cried, her voice breaking. "What can it matter to you what my mother does, if——"

But, with an impatient shake of his head, he freed his arm and fairly ran down the steps and around the drive toward the hotel garage. Two minutes later, he roared past the porch in his roadster. The sound of his motor died away in the direction of the casino.

Beverly, moving as in a dream, went down the steps and gazed blankly after him. So rapidly had shock followed shock that she was still dry-eyed, hurt to numbness.

So he had made love to her only in the absence of her mother! And the moment he had learned where her mother was, he had flung off after her!

Great sobs began to shake the girl's slender body. Like a wounded thing, she wandered into the hotel garden and, flinging herself upon a bench, gave way to her heartbreak and humiliation.

Half an hour later, her grief momentarily spent, Beverly rose wearily from the bench. She entered the hotel by a rear door, not wanting any one to see her stricken face and swollen eyelids.

She found herself in the unlighted sun parlor. Off this room a rear staircase led to the upper floors. She was moving across the room, feeling her way, when two persons entered at the side door from the porch.

She drew back into the shadows. The porch light fell on the pair who had come in. Her mother and Sebastian! She smiled bitterly at the realization that Gordon had evidently missed them. Then she drew in her breath sharply as she saw that her mother was walking a little unsteadily.

"I feel funny," said Mrs. Fen-

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wick, pausing near the door. "What was in that last cocktail I drank, Luis?"

"Nothing that wasn't good for you," Sebastian assured her suavely. "Perhaps you'd best sit down a second."

He assisted Mrs. Fenwick to a chaise longue. Her head sank back, she murmured something, then sank into deep slumber.

With quick, catlike movements Sebastian bent over her and removed the pearl necklace from her throat. He was hurrying toward the door when Beverly stepped from the shadows.

"Just a minute, Mr. Sebastian! Where do you think you are going with those pearls?"

Startled, he wheeled toward her. At the same instant his hand flashed up, pointing a revolver at her.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Fenwick. Kindly don't raise your voice, or I

With quick movements Sebastian removed the pearl necklace from Mrs. Fenwick's throat. Then Beverly stepped from the shadows. "Just a minute, Mr. Sebastian! Where do you think you are going with those pearls?"

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shall have to do something regrettable. Just turn your back to me, and put both hands behind you."

There was no mistaking the steely menace in his low tones. Beverly did as he ordered. Hastily he tore some pull cords from the window drapes and tied her hands and feet. Then he turned her around to gag her with a handkerchief.

Behind him she saw suddenly a man's form blocking the doorway. Her heart gave a leap as she recognized Gordon. The next moment he sprang across the intervening space and hurled his six feet of weight and muscle upon Sebastian.

Sebastian struggled fiercely, but once the revolver was wrested from his grasp he was at the mercy of the stronger man. By the time hotel attendants rushed to the scene, Gordon had his opponent down.

Beverly sighed, and then did a surprising thing for a healthy, athletic girl. She quietly fainted.

It was the following morning, in the sitting room of the Fenwicks' suite.

"You see," explained Gordon, "my father is president of the Zenith Insurance Co. I'm a member of the firm, in charge of the operatives—the detectives who investigate jewel thefts."

"I begin to see," said Beverly. Her eyes were shining as she watched him pace the room while he talked.

"I came here for a few days' rest," he went on. "Then I saw this fellow Sebastian hanging around your mother. I recognized him as a man we had had under suspicion in a recent robbery. So what could I do? Your mother's jewels were insured by our company. It became my duty to stick close to her and Sebastian. I couldn't arrest him until he did something criminal."

"So that's why you left me," she murmured, "right in the middle of——"

"Of telling you I loved you? Yes. I knew your mother was in danger, and there was no time to lose. I reached the casino after she and Sebastian had left, trailed them back here, and caught him red-handed."

He came across the room now and took her hands in his, looking down at her tenderly.

"May I go on where I left off, darling, and tell you that I love you, adore you, want you? That from the moment I saw you, I knew you were the answer to all my dreams?"

"I want to hear it all," she breathed, "over and over again. But, first, hold me tight and kiss me!"

He took her in his arms, and she gave herself up utterly to the sweet, delicious rapture of his kiss.

A voice behind them finally broke in upon their blissful oblivion.

"You make a sweet couple," said Mrs. Fenwick from the doorway. She came toward them smilingly.

"How disillusioned I was!" she continued lightly. "Thinking two young men were fascinated by me, when one wanted my pearls and the other only wished to protect me."

"Oh, mother, don't you mind!" exclaimed Beverly, embracing her sympathetically.

"No sympathy needed, my dear. I'm cured. I've just accepted my lawyer's proposal of marriage over the telephone. We'll have a gorgeous double wedding, Beverly!"

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Midnight Madness

By Joan King

A SERIAL—Part IV.

CHAPTER VII.

JANICE woke and lay gazing at the pale shaft of sunlight struggling in between the drawn satin damask curtains of her bedroom windows. At first, sleep still lay heavy on her lids, misting her brain; then memory flooded back.

Last night had been the night of the play and the supper dance.

Had she dreamed it, or had that scene in her husband's room really happened?

She closed her eyes and lay breathing quickly, her hands pressed against her madly beating heart. She could hear again the murmur of her husband's voice, whispering his love, could feel the pressure of his arms as they held her, the throb of his kisses on her throat, against her lips.

She had believed that she would give years of her life to know that he loved her for one hour—and she had had her hour of ecstasy.

She had taken the love which was

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hers by right, yet the love she had taken had been meant for another girl.

Because of the remains of the fever that was upon him and the drugs he had been obliged to take during the day, he had mistaken her for Gina Mornington.

What would he think if he ever found out the truth? She had been mad—mad!

Yet the memory of that madness thrilled her from head to foot, and she knew that, no matter what price she paid, she would never really regret.

If out of all her life she was to have no more than that one hour—at least, it could never be taken from her.

But she was bitterly ashamed when she thought of what the man she loved would think of her if he ever knew. He must never know; she was determined on that point.

But how was she going to face him?

She prayed that he might be remaining in his room that day—anyhow, until she had more time to collect her courage.

Presently, the maid brought her morning coffee, explaining that she served it late, as she knew that Janice must have been very tired the night before.

Janice bade the girl draw her bath, but she was very slow getting dressed, and finally ordered breakfast to be brought up to her own room. Somehow, she dreaded going down that morning, even though she believed that her husband was still in his room.

But when she did go down, she opened the library door and saw her husband seated at his desk, looking through some papers.

He still looked ill, but the signs of fever had gone. As he glanced up and saw her, he gave a start.

"Hello, Janice!" he exclaimed. "How did everything go?"

She noticed for the first time his eyes did not meet hers, and her heart missed a beat.

It needed a great effort to make her voice sound steady as she moved forward.

"Everything went off very successfully, thanks," she replied. "But I don't think that you ought to be downstairs. You were very ill yesterday."

He made an impatient movement.

"I've had attacks like that before. I can shake them off. If there is anything I loathe, it is staying in my bedroom. I am all right to-day—except that my head is a little woozy from so much quinine."

She turned away and looked out of the window.

"Well, you know best how you feel yourself," she replied. "I must go into town this morning. Can I do anything for you while I'm down there?"

He hesitated.

THE STORY SO FAR: Janice Temple, out of a job, is returning to her home town when, on the train, she meets Roger Greville, who has just been jilted by his fiancée, Gina Mornington. Hating to tell his father, who has never seen Gina, what has happened, he persuades Janice to pose as his fiancée for a month. Roger's father has a stroke, and before he dies he begs Roger to marry Janice. After the old man's death, Roger insists that they pretend that they are happily married. He also forbids her to continue her friendship with Sefton Arlen, a neighbor friend. Roger and Janice become good friends, and Janice hopes that Roger is learning to love her when Gina Mornington returns, determined to win Roger for herself. Roger comes down with an attack of fever, and Janice is with him when he takes her in his arms and kisses her, telling her he loves her, but calling her "Gina."

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"If you don't mind leaving a package with Lawrence & Nye's," he said. "There are some papers they wanted my signature to."

Lawrence & Nye were the family lawyers.

Janice was glad that she really had an excuse to go into the town, for apart from his errand she had nothing to do there at all. But she felt that she could not stay indoors, could not bear to be alone with Roger lest she should betray herself.

She loved him so much, and in spite of everything, she was less than nothing to him. The knowledge was double torture now.

When she had gone, he sat staring in front of him, his hands clenched. He, too, was tortured—tortured by uncertainty which if it were turned into certainty, he felt, would be still greater agony.

But he told himself it couldn't be true.

Gina Mornington could not have come to him last night—the memories which haunted him were just a dream.

He reached for a book and, opening it, tried to read, but he could not do so. All the time, a girl's face came between him and the printed page.

It was not the face of the girl he believed he loved, but of the girl whom he had made his wife.

He shut the book impatiently.

Why should he be so strangely haunted by Janice? Why should he imagine that there was something different about her to-day, as though her beauty had intensified and at the same time taken on a hint of tragedy which it had not held before?

Could it be possible that she cared for Sefton Arlen?

It was strange how the thought disturbed him. Yet she was nothing to him.

Nothing? A dark flush stained his cheek.

She was a girl whose life he had taken and used for his own ends, and however much he might tell himself that she had benefited by the change in her circumstances, his sense of justice and his sense of honor both told him that she deserved more than he had given her.

Suddenly he found himself remembering the strange attraction which she had held for him—that kiss with which he had claimed his bride at his father's bedside, that night when he had paced beneath her window and felt the strength of his emotions like a magnet drawing him to her.

It seemed years ago now. All that part of his life appeared to have been cut away by the arrival of Gina Mornington.

Suppose Gina Mornington had not come back? Would he have learned to love the girl whom he had married?

But he told himself impatiently that love comes only once in a lifetime—real love—and that he had given to Gina Mornington.

He rose impatiently and, walking across to the desk, helped himself to a cigarette from the box which stood upon it. But, after one or two puffs, he flung it into the fire.

He crossed the room and sat down on a couch near one of the long French windows.

While he sat there staring discontentedly into space, he heard a girl's voice outside the door and turned his head quickly as it opened, expecting to see Janice, but the girl who stood smiling at him from the threshold was Gina Mornington.

"You're not to get up!" she ex-

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claimed as he would have risen, and reaching his side, pressed him back into his seat. "I was determined to come and find out how you were, and when the butler told me you were downstairs, I insisted on coming in and announcing myself." She seated herself beside him, looking

Janice closed her eyes and lay breathing quickly, her hands pressed against her madly beating heart. She could hear again the murmur of her husband's voice, could feel the pressure of his arms, the throb of his kisses.

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anxiously into his face. "I was so terribly worried, I felt that I simply had to come and see how you were to-day, my dear."

"I'm all right," he told her, a touch of restraint in his voice.

She made no reply.

Suddenly, as their eyes met, he bent toward her.

"Gina," he said, his hand closing over her wrist, "last night—— Where were you?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, and something she could not define stopped her from saying more as she gazed into his troubled face.

He released her, passing one hand over his eyes.

"Last night, I had a strange dream," he told her. "I was alone in my room and had fallen asleep by the fire. Suddenly, I woke up, and you were there, bending over me. You and I were there—alone. I could have sworn, when I woke up this morning, that it was true."

As she listened, her heart began to beat quickly with excitement. She was fond of pretending to be of the helpless, clinging type, the type which, she believed, appealed most to men; but in reality she had a brain which was as keen as a man's. She could grasp a thing in an instant. Now she saw what a chance his uncertainty gave her of getting the hold over him for which she had longed.

The color flooded her face and then receded, leaving her deathly pale with excitement.

For a moment longer, her eyes held his, then the heavily lashed lids fluttered down, veiling them from his sight.

She spoke hardly above her breath, and yet every word she uttered fell clearly on the stillness.

"Roger!" she murmured, her voice making a passionate caress of his name. "My dear! Suppose it was no dream, but a reality."

"What are you saying?" he asked hoarsely. "How could you have been here?"

"Don't you know the old proverb —that love laughs at locksmiths?" she asked. "I knew you were alone." She slipped to her knees beside him. "My dearest, don't you understand? I knew you were alone —something stronger than myself forced me to run the risk to come to you. You won't blame me, because my love for you was so strong. Even though our love must always remain a secret, I do not care. To know that I belong to you is the greatest joy in the world, and nothing can take that from me."

Kneeling beside him, she reached up her arms and, putting them about his neck, drew his face down to hers.

Mechanically, his arm went about her shoulders, but he was aware of no quickening pulse beat, no thrill from the nearness of this girl, the very thought of whom had once had the power to set him ablaze.

He had a strange feeling of numbness, as though he had received a stunning blow, and he looked blankly at the lovely, alluring face so close to his.

Then his brain cleared as though a great shaft of light had pierced it.

At that moment, he knew that whatever he had felt in the past for this girl, he did not and never had really loved her.

The glamour of her spell was dead.

He did not know where the knowledge came from; he dared not ask; he only knew that his discovery had come too late.

Janice turned in at the lodge gates and saw a car a few yards ahead on its way to the house.

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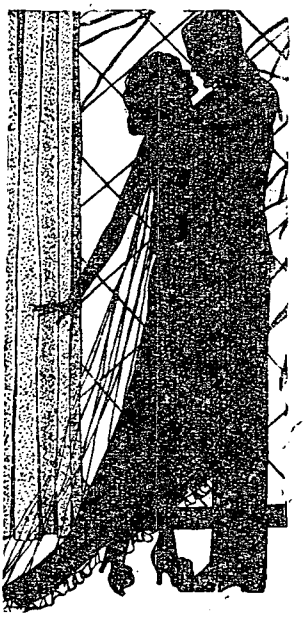
To her annoyance, she recognized it as Sefton Arlen's.

Reaching the curve in the drive, she would have turned off in the direction of the garage, hoping to miss the visitor, when he stopped his car and, getting out, hailed her. She was obliged to stop.

"I've just come to pick up Gina Mornington," he told her. "I promised that I would pick her up and drive her back, as I'm lunching at the Chelmsfords', where she is staying."



Janice felt suddenly cold, but under the coldness her hatred for the other girl smoldered fiercely.

"Do you know her well?" she managed to say.

"Yes; she and I met two or three years ago when I was abroad," he answered, and as they turned and walked toward the house together, he gave her a sharp look.

In spite of her effort to hide it, some of her hatred for the other girl had crept into her voice.

"Your husband and Gina are old friends, I believe," he observed casually.

Janice's hands clenched, but she managed to keep her voice quite steady as she replied:

"Yes, I believe they are."

Rounding the corner of the house, they reached the steps which led up to the terrace, and longing to end the interview, Janice began to mount them, saying that they would go in that way.

"If Roger is still in the library, he can let us in," she added.

A few more steps brought her to the first of the library windows. The curtains were drawn back, and any one standing outside could see straight into the room. It was impossible for them not to see those two within—the girl kneeling with her arms around the man's neck—and it was at that precise moment that Roger Greville placed his own arm around Gina Mornington's shoulders.

For a moment, Janice stood as though turned to stone; then, forgetful of the fact that she was not alone, she turned and walked blindly away.

Reaching the parapet, she gripped it and stood gazing down into the gardens below, seeing nothing but a red mist, and in the center of it those two—her husband and the girl he loved.

Suddenly, Sefton Arlen spoke beside her.

"Surely, Janice, you are not going to endure that sort of thing."

Her need to speak, to ease some of the pain in her overcharged heart, was so great that she forgot the identity of her companion.

"They were engaged to be married," she said dully.

His eyes flashed understandingly.

"I know," he nodded. "And they quarreled. That was how you caught him on the rebound. You're curiously like her. Every one has noticed that. My dear girl"—his hand closed on hers—"don't you know that she is not the sort to let go her grip on any man who has once cared for her? She is dangerously fascinating. Surely, you're not going to allow yourself to be

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made a laughingstock. If they want each other, let them see that they are welcome. You must realize that you won't suffer. You have a career at your finger tips."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I've watched you at every rehearsal, and last night you simply amazed me. You're a born actress. If you'd like to leave Roger Greville, I'll find you a decent job without the slightest difficulty. Why not let me help you?"

"You are very good, but at present I have no intention of going away. I think we had better go in now—the other way."

He laid a hand on her arm, detaining her.

"Promise me one thing," he begged. "If ever you do want help, promise that you will look on me as your friend and let me help you."

There was such a ring of sincerity in his voice that Janice forgot all she had heard about him and felt a thrill of gratitude.

After all, it was good to think that somebody really cared.

"Yes, I'll remember," she promised, "and thank you."

As Arlen followed her, his heart was beating with a new hope.

Were the fates going to be good to him? Would they help him to win this girl, whom he wanted more than he had ever wanted anything in the world?

Janice paced the floor of her bedroom like some caged thing.

The silence of the house mocked her with memories. It was not twenty-four hours since she had stolen through the silence to arms which had only taken her because they believed they held another girl.

Too late, now, she saw what the consequences of that stolen hour would be—that by her own act she had forged an unbreakable tie between the man she loved and Gina Mornington.

She could not think clearly. Her knowledge of the love between those two threw her mind into chaos.

At first she had meant to tell her husband what she had seen through the library window, but she had found that she dared not do it, lest she should betray her own love for him.

For she felt that she would rather die than have him guess that she cared.

But she dared not stay here. She could not.

Suddenly she made up her mind. She would go away now, leave the house this very night, and he should not know where she had gone.

Let him explain her absence as best he could; let him suffer some of the humiliation that was hers.

She told herself that she hated him, and wished with all her heart that it was true.

She had been waiting for the moon to rise, for she would have to walk to the junction, four miles away, in order to catch the early-morning train to town.

As she moved across the room to the window and drew aside the curtain, she saw that the moon was just coming up over the tops of a clump of fir trees.

Turning back into the room, she looked around at the luxury she was leaving.

The brief note of farewell she had written to the man she had married lay on the dressing table, the one suitcase which she was taking with her stood ready packed near the bed.

She picked up her heavy coat and put it on. Opening the door, she paused to switch off the light, and

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It was impossible for them not to see those two within. For a moment, Janice stood as though turned to stone; then, forgetful of the fact that she was not alone, she turned and walked blindly away.

picking up her suitcase, made her way out into the darkened corridor.

Five minutes later, she let herself out of a side door and, shutting it silently behind her, sped away into the shadows.

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Once she paused and looked back at the great gray pile of the old house—the place where she had learned that love and suffering so often mean the same thing to a girl.

Roger Greville went to bed that night, and then there was no sleep for him.

Hour after hour he lay staring wide-eyed into the darkness.

There was no hope in her heart as she turned and walked blindly out of the life of the man she loved with a love whose bitterness was akin to hatred.

It had been very late before He was like a man who fears a locked door inside which he is afraid to look.

His infatuation for Gina Mornington was dead. He felt that he hated her.

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He had married Janice against his will. He had no love to offer her, but he would never have deliberately broken the vows he made to her.

He believed that he had neither given nor claimed anything from her, but he had never meant to hurt her.

Dawn was long past when he fell into an uneasy sleep, and it seemed as though he had slept only a few moments when he was awakened by a hurried knocking on his door, and in answer to his sleepy call, a maid came in.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "I've just been to madam's room; her bed hasn't been slept in, and I found this."

She held out an envelope as she spoke.

With a queer feeling at his heart he ripped open the envelope. A moment later he was staring down at the slip of paper in his hand.

"I am going away," Janice had written. "You will realize that the best thing for us both is to end our marriage."

As he read those lines and knew that she was gone, he knew that he loved the girl whom he had married.

A groan of anguish broke from him. Had he learned the truth too late?

CHAPTER VIII.

Janice sat on the edge of the narrow bed in the room which she had engaged in a quiet hotel in the East Fifties.

It was all unspeakably drab—the walls with their faded paper, the dressing table on which the scarf was not quite clean, the dingy net curtains at the window only half veiling the dull sky beyond.

How different it all was from the surroundings which had been hers in Roger Greville's home.

She had determined to try to get work on the stage, remembering what Sefton Arlen had said to her. But she was equally determined not to seek his help, for she felt that he was the sort of man whose friendship meant danger to any girl.

Besides, she wanted to be independent.

One of the girls who used to work with her had been on the stage, and from her Janice had heard about theatrical agents through whom it was possible to obtain stage work.

As soon as she had breakfasted, she purchased a weekly theatrical paper, searching the columns of the paper for what she wanted.

She found the names and addresses of several agents, and selected one which was not far away.

But when she reached the open doorway inside which a narrow staircase led upward to the agent's office, her courage almost deserted her.

Climbing the stairs, she entered the waiting room, and her heart sank again as she saw the number of people who were already there.

She sat down nervously, aware that every one was staring at her, and there followed the most uncomfortable ten minutes she had ever known in her life.

If she had had the courage to do so, she would have got up and gone out, and she was just trying to summon it to her aid when an inner door opened and a small, dark man came out. He was accompanied by a taller, gray-haired man, and the two of them walked to the door together, and as they parted, the former turned and caught sight of Janice.

He paused and stared at her.

"Tell me," he demanded, "where

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do you come from and why haven't I seen you before?"

Somehow there was something about him which she instinctively liked, and it gave her courage.

"Can I see Mr. Whitehouse?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered good-naturedly, "unless those lovely eyes of yours are quite blind."

From his words, she gathered that this was the agent, Arnold Whitehouse, himself.

Five minutes later, she was sitting opposite him in his private office explaining to him her desire to obtain work on the stage.

He listened until she had finished.

"I suppose you realize," he told her, "that you have got a tremendous nerve. You come here, having had no professional experience whatever, and demand a job in the most overcrowded of all the professions, and the most difficult to break into. What makes you think that you can act?"

She hesitated.

"Because I was told so, by a man who really knows," she finally confessed. "He offered to help me, but I don't want him to do so."

The agent raised his brows. He could understand that quite a lot of men would be willing to help such a lovely girl. It was her beauty which had made him notice her just now, and he was used to lovely girls.

He drew a big ledger toward him and, picking up a pen, asked a few brief, businesslike questions, noting down the answers.

Then he rose and held out his hand.

"Well, frankly, Miss—er——" he began. "I forgot to ask your name!"

Janice hesitated, then she remembered that her mother's maiden name was Darling and gave him that, with her own Christian name.

"Janice Darling," he repeated, as he wrote it down. "Well, Miss Darling, I don't hold out much hope of being able to do anything for you, but if you care to stop in the office every day, I'll keep you in mind if anything turns up."

With that she had to be content.

But, though for the next ten days she visited the office every day, she never received anything but the same greeting, one which she heard given to dozens of other girls: "Absolutely nothing to-day, my dear."

She also tried other agents, with the same disappointing results, until she began to lose heart.

Her visit to the agents took up only a small part of the day, and there was all the rest in which to think, and worst of all the long hours of the night, for she slept badly, and when she did sleep, it was to dream of Roger Greville.

Try as she would to forget, she could not put him out of her mind.

She knew that the time would come when she would have to communicate with him, for, if their marriage was to be dissolved, he would have to know where she was; but she didn't want to let him know until she got work and could prove to him that she was independent.

One day, driven by an uncontrollable impulse, she climbed on top of a Fifth Avenue bus, and from her seat she looked down again at the spot where she had first encountered Roger Greville.

The bus stopped in front of the jeweler's shop, and as she gazed down, it seemed to Janice as though she was once again the plainly dressed girl who had found herself suddenly looking into a man's eyes.

She knew now the meaning of the surge of emotion which had quickened all her pulses.

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That day she went to Arnold Whitehouse's office in the afternoon.

As she entered the waiting room, the office door was flung wide open, and he came out and beckoned to his secretary, who was talking to a golden-haired girl. As he turned back, he caught sight of Janice and paused to speak to her.

"Nothing to-day," he told her, and then added in a lower voice: "But if you'll be in promptly at eleven to-morrow morning, I may be able to fix you up. I don't promise, but there is just a chance."

She thanked him and, as he went back into his office, and she left the waiting room, there was new hope in her heart.

She got halfway down the stairs toward the street when she heard footsteps descending behind her, and a voice called to her. She turned to find the agent's secretary close to her, holding out an envelope.

"Mr. Whitehouse said that if you would go to this address at once, with this letter, there is a chance you might get something right away."

Before Janice could reply, the secretary had turned and was gone.

Janice glanced down at the envelope in her hand. The flap was sealed down, and it was addressed to "Mr. Paige Rendell, Star Theater," and marked "Urgent."

Less than a quarter of an hour later, Janice found herself entering the stage door of the Star Theater, and in reply to the inquiry of the doorkeeper, she showed him the letter.

He sent a boy who was in the office with it, bidding him "take that to Mr. Rendell."

In a short time, the boy came back, asking Janice to follow him.

She never forgot the interview which followed, and when she left the theater she could hardly believe that she had actually been hired by one of the most famous producers in New York, to play a part in the play which was then in rehearsal.

The girl who had been originally engaged for the part had been taken ill that morning, and it was difficult to find a girl to fill her place. Janice happened to be the exact type needed for the part, which, though it was not a large one, was very important.

When she confessed to having had no real experience, the producer merely nodded.

"That doesn't matter. I am sure that you will be all right," he told her.

Janice had never known what real nervousness meant until she stood on the deserted stage at the Star at eleven o'clock the next morning.

She had never believed that any ordeal could be so terrible, and it was only sheer will power which stopped her from failing.

Several times Paige Rendell stopped her, making her go over the piece again, and each time, as she caught the exact intonation he directed, he gave a nod of approval. He saw at once that she was a born actress and needed very little teaching.

At lunch time the rehearsal was dismissed until the afternoon, and Janice was just walking off the stage after the others when the producer called her back.

"Just a minute, Miss Darling," he said. "A gentleman here is very anxious to make your acquaintance, or rather renew it—for I understand that you have met before."

An immaculately dressed figure had just strolled out of the shadows, and Janice felt her heart miss a beat,

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Janice was just walking off the stage when the producer called her back. "A gentleman here is very anxious to make your acquaintance, or rather renew it—for I understand that you have met before," he said.

for the man who stood holding out his hand and smiling down at her was Sefton Arlen.

"It is more than good to meet again!" Taking her hand and retaining it, Sefton Arlen glanced at

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the producer. "Well, my dear Rendell, wasn't I right when I guaranteed that Ja—that Miss Darling was a born actress?"

The other man nodded.

Withdrawing her hand, Janice gave Sefton Arlen a swift, startled look.

"What do you mean? You——" she began.

"I happened to be in Arnold Whitehouse's office yesterday, and I caught sight of you and sent a letter of introduction to our friend, Paige Rendell."

So it had been through Sefton Arlen, after all, that she had obtained an engagement!

The knowledge brought with it deep disappointment, which Janice found it difficult to hide.

If he guessed what was in her mind, Sefton Arlen gave no sign.

Ever since he knew that she had left her husband, he had searched for her, and had almost despaired of finding her. But now he felt that his luck had turned.

"Let's go and have some lunch," he said. "There are a good many things I want to talk to you about."

Janice hesitated, but it seemed that it would be too ungracious to refuse, and so less than a quarter of an hour later she found herself sitting opposite him in a well-known restaurant near the theater.

Looking across at her, Sefton Arlen felt his pulses quicken. It seemed to him that Janice had changed in some indescribable way. The vividness of her beauty had somehow deepened. There were dark-violet shadows beneath her eyes, and a hint of tragedy about her face in repose.

She had been worrying, he thought, and a sharp stab of jealousy shot through him.

He was amazed to find that he was capable of jealousy, and he could not understand the strange influence which this girl seemed to have established over his life.

Love, to him, had never been more than a pastime. He was used to easy conquests, and enjoyed flitting like a bee from flower to flower; but he had known vaguely from his first meeting with Janice that the attraction she held for him was something different.

"Now, tell me," he demanded, "where have you been hiding yourself, and why? You knew that I could help you. Why were you so independent?"

She flushed.

"I didn't want to bother you," she said.

"We'll let it go at that, I think—in case I hear something less flattering. But what sort of engagement did you contemplate obtaining? The only sort of work Whitehouse could have gotten for you was a place in the chorus, where the fact that you are so very ornamental would have offset your lack of experience. Thank Heaven that I've found you, and that you were wise enough to leave home when you did!"

She made no reply, and he was content to steer the conversation away from her private affairs.

He could be a very charming and amusing companion, and for the first time in many days Janice found herself laughing and forgetting a little of her heartache.

This meeting with Sefton Arlen made her realize more than ever how intensely lonely she had been, and she could not help being a little glad that her loneliness was at an end. After all, it was good to feel that some one took an interest in what happened to her.

"Have you made up your mind

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what you intend to do?" he asked, as the lunch was drawing to an end. "If you are to make a career for yourself, it would be much better for you to be free. You're in touch with Greville, I suppose?"

She shook her head.

"No. I—I wanted to wait until——"

"You could prove that you were independent," he finished for her. "Well, you're safe now. If anything should happen to this play—which, however, I believe will be a success—I can always manage to see that you have work."

She gave him a level look.

"Why should you interest yourself so much in me? It is very good of you, but——"

"I believe in you," he broke in shortly. "If you really want to work, I believe there is a big career in front of you. I can't think why you never turned your thoughts to the stage before. Look here"—he bent a little nearer to her—"you must be sensible. Put Roger Greville out of your mind altogether. He isn't worth a second thought. You have some pride, haven't you?"

"Should I be here if I hadn't?" she asked wearily.

"You'd have been mad if you'd stayed to play second fiddle to Gina Mornington," he retorted with brutal frankness. "You knew that they were engaged before he married you? Anyhow, whether you free him or not, she doesn't care. She has him, and she means to keep him."

Janice's hand resting on her knee beneath the table clenched, but she lifted her head with a reckless gesture.

"You've seen her recently?" she asked.

"A few days ago." He hesitated. "They're in town, going about everywhere together. You'll have to do something about it, Janice."

"Yes," she repeated dully, "I'll have to do something about it."

"Meanwhile, though"—he glanced at his watch—"we had better be getting back to the theater. Until after the opening, I want you to think as much of your part and as little about other things as you possibly can. You must make good, Janice. I want you to, and I want from you what I have never cared to ask from any girl before—I want your friendship."

"Surely, you deserve that," she told him.

As he followed her out of the restaurant, Sefton Arlen was more puzzled about himself than he had ever been.

He talked of friendship, but he knew that he wanted a great deal more than that. He wanted to win her and make her his own.

If he failed, he knew that nothing in life would ever be worth having again.

For the first time, he was afraid of failure.

When Roger Greville realized that Janice was gone, he explained to the servants that his wife had been called away suddenly by the illness of a relative, and within a few hours he himself had packed up and departed.

He had absolutely no idea of where Janice could have gone. He felt that she might have returned to New York, and it was with the vague hope of finding her that he went there himself.

Somehow, he shrank from tracing her by the help of any of the detective agencies whose aid he might have called in.

It was his belief that he had forfeited his right to claim her, to drag

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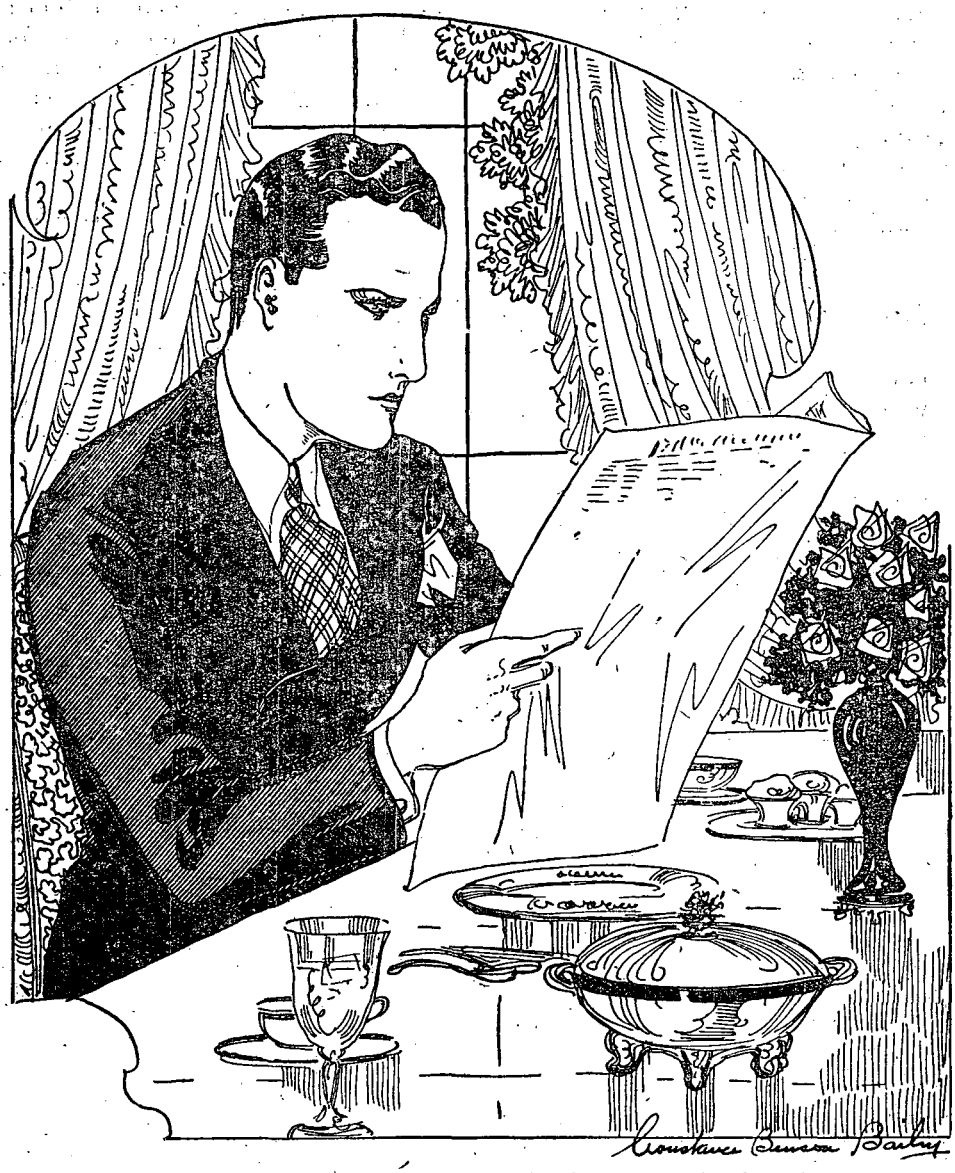

Janice had made a success of her part in the play. The day after the opening, a photograph of Janice Darling smiled up at Roger Greville from the front page of the paper. He had found his wife!

her back into his life if she wished to be free, that held him back.

He stayed at his club, and before he had been there two days, he was called to the telephone to hear Gina Mornington's voice demanding pleadingly why he had gone away without a word to her.

She, too, had come to New York, and had taken a suite at one of the big hotels, and she implored him to come to see her.

It seemed to him that he was bound in honor to go.

But Sefton Arlen had exaggerated when he told Janice that her hus-

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band and Gina Mornington were being seen everywhere together.

As much as it was possible to do so, Roger Greville avoided Gina Mornington, and when she reproached him for doing so, told her that he had a lot of business to transact.

She accepted the explanation with a very bad grace, but she did not suspect that he had changed toward her. She believed she had won him back. By a lucky chance—a chance which she believed to have been born out of an illusion of his delirium—she had bound him to her. And she had gotten rid of Janice.

Of one thing she was determined. That other girl should never come back into his life, though the present arrangement didn't suit her at all.

Roger Greville refused to discuss his wife with her, and Gina did not know if he was aware of Janice's whereabouts or not. But she wanted the thing put on a definite footing.

When the time came for the production of "Exiled Hearts" at the Star Theater, Janice faced her ordeal bravely. She was determined to succeed. She had so much at stake.

Although the part she was playing was not a big one, it was very important, and she made the success of the play.

The critics were unanimous in acclaiming Janice Darling a find.

She had beauty, talent, and what was more important, that elusive thing known as personality, and in her one big scene she brought the house down.

She was a success!

The next day, there were photographs of her in all the papers, and when Roger Greville sat down to his breakfast, a photograph of Janice Darling smiled up at him from the front page.

He had found his wife!

TO BE CONCLUDED.

ENCHANTED GARDEN

I WALK in a garden enchanted
Whenever I think of you—
A garden of rainbow splendor,
Prismatic in color and hue;
And somehow each flower resembles
The beauty of your sweet face,
And somehow the trees and bushes
Portray your bewitching grace.

Diana and Sappho and Psyche
Are sculptured in marble there,
Companioned by beautiful Venus,
With whom they vie to compare;
But somehow your beauty surpasses
The statues of Grecian art,
Because it is tender and human,
And echoes the pulse of my heart.

FRANKLIN PIERCE CARRIGAN.

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Borrowed Man

By Jesse F. Gelders

WEDNESDAY night! We'll probably go somewhere and dance afterward. It's not a party, Merrilee—just a couple of girls I used to know at school and their dates. Bring your own man. I know you have plenty to choose from."

Merrilee Dodd caught her breath. It was lucky Nola was busy taking things out of her trunks and packing them away in the maple chiffonier, so that she didn't notice the effect of her words.

Merrilee tried to think of some escape from the situation, but

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couldn't. She'd been afraid of it, from the moment she received Nola's letter saying she was coming to New York for a two-month's pleasure stay. And when Nola announced she was taking an apartment in the same building as Merrilee's, the thing had become certain.

Well, it was her own fault. Merrilee realized that. She shouldn't have written those letters to Nola and her other friends back in Millingham, giving such a gilded picture of the good times she was having. "I go out three or four nights a week with the most wonderful men," she had written.

Nola, tucking away a stack of lingerie—what clothes the girl had! —was saying now, "I'm anxious to meet some."

Merrilee choked out a reply, she hardly knew what. She was almost on the verge of confessing the truth. But, great grief, how would it sound?

"Those letters about the good times," she'd have to say, "weren't true. I haven't been going out at all. Plenty of men have asked me, but they aren't the sort of men I like, so——"

Oh, gosh, that would just sound like sour grapes. And think what Nola would write to the folks back in Millingham! Nola was a good friend all right, but not such a good friend that she wouldn't take a gossipy delight in writing:

> What do you think! The wonderful times Merrilee has been telling about, are all just dreams. She never sees a soul. She claims she doesn't like the men who've asked her out. To hear her tell it, there are hundreds. But she couldn't get even one for a little party I was having. It's a pity, too, because she's such a sweet girl.

Merrilee could almost see that letter. She could hear the shocked but eager exclamations of sympathy back in Millingham. Sympathy! She gritted her teeth at the idea.

"I—I think I'd better be getting down to my apartment," she stammered. "It's about bedtime."

"Why, it's only ten o'clock, Merrilee!"

"I know. But I—I was out so late last night."

In her single room, which seemed unusually cramped after the luxury of Nola's suite, she tried to think of a way out of her embarrassment. It was almost as bad as those days back in Millingham, before she started earning her own money, when she never had the right clothes. Finally she went to bed, the unsolved problem haunting her.

At the office next morning, whenever an ebb in the work permitted personal thought, it was still a taunt. Of course she might get Henry Powell, who had asked her for dates three or four times. But she never had felt like going anywhere with him, and she shuddered at the notion of presenting him in his trick clothes and trick manners to Nola and her friends, as one of the "wonderful men" she had met in New York!

Tapping a list of purchase orders awaiting her check-up, she staged a mental review of the other men who might be available. There was Mr. Harbor, old enough to be her great-uncle; Murray Phillips, so boring that he could make five minutes seem an hour; Max Burton; Jimmie Keel—— No, they were all impossible! It was hard to believe that one girl could attract such a gallery of ineligibles. Of course, she hadn't had much opportunity to meet New York men, except here in the office. And it just happened that none were very desirable—except Harvey

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Tate. And he had never asked her for a date.

Wasn't that irony for you? The one man who could have qualified, wasn't interested. He was inside talking with Mr. London now, and on his way out, he'd probably stop as usual, and ask her to be sure to put through the papers on the purchases from his company. Then he'd chat for a couple of minutes, in a way that would show he could be fascinating for hours. And that would be all!

He was coming out now, strolling toward her.

"They're getting another order of those tumblers," he said, "and——"

"I know. And you want me to put it through right away. All right."

He laughed. There was a quiet heartiness about his laughter, harmonizing with the strength and restraint of his face, which seemed more tanned than ever, in contrast with the white flash of his teeth. Merrilee had a faint sense of life speeding up in her veins, as he paused at her desk.

"You read my thoughts so well," he observed, "I'm almost afraid to think in your presence."

His conversation, in the fleeting minutes while it lasted, was always just personal enough to give the illusion of being only a part of a larger friendship. It made Merrilee feel almost as if she really knew him.

"I wonder if you'd do me a favor ——" She stopped herself. What on earth was she saying? On an instant's crazy impulse she had almost asked him to help her!

"Gladly. What is it?" he urged.

She hesitated, almost panic-stricken. She had to say something, or he'd think her silly. The wild impulse of a moment before, seized her again.

"It's a strange thing to ask. I need an escort," she heard herself saying. She could feel the hot blush on her face. "I want to play a sort of joke on a friend of mine. You're just the type of man she likes," she declared, with inspiration that amazed herself. "The other men I've been dating here in New York aren't as likely to make her jealous."

For a moment he did not reply, standing with a puzzled grin, the color deepening under his tan. Now it was he who was embarrassed. It helped Merrilee recapture her poise. Also, she was relieved and pleased at what she had said about dating other men and making her friend jealous. The idea had come to her out of nowhere.

"I'm sure you'll like Nola Williams, too," she continued suavely. "She's really beautiful—tall and blond." She was about to add, "And very wealthy," but decided that it would have the wrong effect. "It's Wednesday night. Will you help me?" she asked.

"Isn't it a pretty difficult assignment"—he grinned uncertainly—"trying to make some girl jealous?"

"I think you're capable. Oh, and of course," she added with sudden positiveness, "I'll pay my own share of the expenses. It will be strictly business. At least, that part of it will. Fifty-fifty."

His gray eyes surveyed her with a smile she could not quite interpret.

"All right," he laughed, "but it's your own idea."

Merrilee dressed and made up more carefully than she had since the first month she had been in New York. Her dress was of deep-green, that seemed to bring out her color, the flush of her cheeks, the deep-brown of her eyes, the somewhat lighter soft brown of her hair. She had arranged the hair to curve

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"I wonder if you'd do me a favor. I need an escort." She could feel the hot blush on her face. "I want to play a sort of joke on a friend of mine."

partly over her ears, instead of in the simple little-girl style she always wore at the office. She laughed at herself. Such a lot of attention to trifles!

When Harvey came, he seemed surprised and pleased at her appearance. She realized he hadn't seen her that way before. "Your usual charm," he smiled, "is more noticeable than ever."

The remark was just a bit of pleasantry, but Merrilee flushed with a little ripple of excitement.

They went up to Nola's apartment. Nola, in shimmering blue, met them with a bright exclamation of pleasure and led them in to the already merry group.

Merrilee felt a little shiver of excitement. Everybody seemed nice. The girls were pretty, the men attractive. Merrilee couldn't help noticing how smoothly Harvey Tate seemed to fit in with the others, and yet seemed to have some subtly superior quality which without causing offense, still set him above them. He brought her a cocktail, remaining delightfully attentive. He was playing his part beautifully.

When they went to the dance at

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the Cloudline Club, Harvey guided her about the glazed floor in lithe, strong rhythm, so suavely attuned to the music that his steps might have been written by the composer as a part of the score.

He danced with Nola and the others, always returning to lead Merrilee off for another number. She was deliciously aware of the pressure of his arm around her, the steel of his shoulder beneath her touch, the nearness of his bronzed face, brushing lightly against her hair.

She let herself think for a moment, "How wonderful it is—just to be with this man!" Then, with a wrench of will power, she dragged her thoughts to reality. These thrills were borrowed. Harvey Tate had only lent himself to her, as a favor.

When they finally went home, Harvey and she in some way became separated from Nola and her escort, taking a taxicab to themselves.

Merrilee sat back with her eyelids half lowered, aware of Harvey's smiling nearness, yet feeling dreadfully like *Cinderella* at the approach of midnight, when borrowed happiness would be snatched away. She was suddenly rebellious at that thought.

"I wish," Harvey was saying whimsically, "that doing favors for people were always as pleasant as this has been."

"I hope you'll be able to help me out once more." Her words came on a sudden impulse, but the tone was casual. "I promised Nola I'd go with her on the eighteenth. Will you take me? You know, just to round out the impression." With quick strategy which surprised her, she added, "To-night worked out so beautifully. Having you as a date made just the right impression on her."

"Why, all right," consented Harvey, with that odd smile which she could not interpret.

At her first opportunity, she spoke to Nola.

"What are you doing the eighteenth?"

"Why, nothing. Oh, yes. That's a Wednesday. I have a date with Dick Mills."

At first she didn't think a double date could be arranged.

"I have a kind of tentative engagement with Harvey," said Merrilee.

Nola's face lighted quickly—too quickly.

"Maybe we can fix it," she said. "I'll call Dick."

Next day she reported, "It's all right. We're just going to the Danube. You come, too."

The Danube was a colorful, but serene place, where the orchestra skillfully alternated gay, sweet Straus's waltzes with the best of the latest tunes.

Again Merrilee was in Harvey's arms, dancing. And again life seemed to be moving faster through her veins because of his nearness. There was a thrill of being touched by his hand, in being held close against him as they danced.

Merrilee found herself wishing his arms were around her in a real embrace, wishing she were crushed close against him to be kissed. Even the thought made her heart pound.

She was in love with him! It seemed odd that she should just be realizing it, all at once, this way. She must have been in love with him for days, maybe for weeks!

She looked up at his face, close to hers. Did he care, too? His eyes met hers, and her nerves tingled

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with an embarrassed but delightful warmth. His arm tightened about her.

Surely he cared—a little, anyway—maybe more than a little. Well, she would know on the way home to-night, perhaps.

As they returned to their table, Merrilee felt a surge of gratitude to Nola. If it hadn't been for her, she might never really have known Harvey! She almost wanted to throw her arms around Nola's neck, and thank her. Instead, she smiled at her and exclaimed: "Nola, you're simply gorgeous in that dress! Isn't she beautiful?"

Harvey and Dick Mills agreed.

When the four finally trooped out of the Danube, all took the same cab. It was the natural thing to do, Merrilee realized, though she hadn't counted on it. Harvey was between Nola and her, and Dick faced them from one of the folding seats.

Nola and Harvey had become engaged in some sort of banter, probably over something they had discussed while dancing together. Occasionally it included the other two, then something Nola would address directly to Harvey would claim his whole attention.

A sudden displeasure shot through Merrilee. It was akin to jealousy. She resisted it, telling herself it was stupid. But as Nola continued to usurp Harvey's attention, she burned with resentment.

In the foyer of their apartment building, Dick and Harvey said good night, with brief handshakes.

Nola called after Harvey laughingly, "Don't forget next Tuesday."

"All right," he replied, striding out.

A thousand needles pricked Merrilee. Her heart seemed to leap to her throat and fall back with a thud.

In the elevator, Nola confided, smiling:

"We're going to have dinner at Yesterday's Tavern."

"Nice of him to ask you," Merrilee replied.

She hadn't meant to speak sharply, but something in her voice caused Nola to explain.

"It was a sort of mutual invitation. I told him I'd heard of it but had never been there, and he said he'd take me. Why, do you mind? I mean, do you like him?"

Merrilee couldn't reply. No words would fit.

"Oh, of course you like him," Nola supplied, with innocence in her blue eyes and real sincerity in her voice. "But I know you don't like him too much. You can spare him. You still have plenty of others. He says so himself."

"Yes," Merrilee choked.

The elevator had stopped at her floor, and the operator was waiting for her to leave. She stepped out, almost stumbling, and hurried to the shelter of her apartment.

All the loneliness of her months in New York suddenly crushed in upon her. Happiness had come so close—and passed her by. She had had Harvey Tate's companionship just long enough to realize she loved him. And then Nola, who always had everything she wanted, got him, too.

She couldn't blame Nola, though. She had handed him to her. She had virtually told them both to go ahead and care for each other!

What a mess she had made of her own happiness, she thought dismally.

The next evening, Nola stopped at her door for a minute.

"I was talking with Harvey on

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the phone," she said. "If you have a date Tuesday, why don't you come along with us?"

"Oh, no, Nola. But thanks!"

"Sorry, Merrilee," said Nola. "We just thought you might be having a date anyway, and——"

"Oh!" Nola's remark, meant innocently enough, had bruised her already wounded pride. Did they think she couldn't get another date? Well, she could! She'd show them both. "Well, I do have," she said, as if reconsidering. "I'll ask him if he wants to go to the Tavern."

When Nola had gone, Merrilee sat with hands clenched until her knuckles showed white, trying to think of a suitable man.

Jimmie Keel wasn't really so bad. He just hadn't interested her. She'd told him she was awfully busy, and he'd said he'd be glad to see her when she had time.

At the office next day, when Jimmie strolled in, she smiled. After a minute's conversation, she ventured a remark that she wasn't quite so busy lately. And—just like that—it was all arranged!

Jimmie wasn't quite tall enough, but he was really nice-looking and fairly interesting. Merrilee realized that she might have found him all right for an occasional evening before, if she hadn't unconsciously compared him with Harvey Tate.

That was what had happened! She had met Harvey on her third day at the office, and since then, no other man had seemed attractive. The truth stabbed cruelly. It hurt more, because she was aware of it too late.

Tuesday evening was misery. The four of them made a congenial group, but Nola exercised a sort of possessive claim on Harvey's attention. It was so subtle and withal so natural, that it could be felt rather than seen. But it tore at the hurt in Merrilee's heart. Sometimes for an instant, Merrilee met Harvey's gaze. Deep in the gray of his eyes was that look she never could quite read. It made her pulse throb faster.

Arriving home at last was a relief.

"Good night," said Jimmie. "Let's do this again, soon."

"Fine," responded Merrilee.

But she knew she wouldn't. It wasn't fair, even to Jimmie, to use him this way. And for herself, it was only misery.

It was a relief that Nola didn't ask her to come along when she went out with Harvey the next week—a relief and torture. She wasn't needed now. They preferred to be alone.

Merrilee sat in her apartment and tried to close her mind to the bitterness of her thoughts. She tried to forget those few bright hours when she had been with Harvey. Remembering them only hurt. She jumped to her feet and paced the floor, as if in a desperate, futile effort to vent her emotions in some sort of action. If only she could do something!

Harvey came to the office to arrange the details of an order his firm had received. He paused beside her desk, leaning his bronzed hand against its edge, smiling as he chatted.

Merrilee felt a cheated yearning, then a sudden rebellion against fate. Another of those curious, unpremeditated notions flashed through her mind. In an instant she was acting on it, concealing her impetuousness with amazing tact.

"I was just thinking about you, Harvey," she began carelessly. "Another friend of mine from out of town, is coming to-morrow, and

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I wondered if you wouldn't help me again—just as a lark. It worked out so well the first time, you know, for everybody concerned."

For a moment Harvey didn't speak. He gazed at her in uncertain silence, as if trying to figure what she meant by that.

"Of course," she added in a quick, matter-of-fact way, "I'll pay my share of the expenses, just as before."

"All right," said Harvey, with a slow, rather puzzled smile. "I know it'll be pleasant."

"And by the way," Merrilee told him, "this girl isn't from Millingham. She's from Central City. She and Nola don't know each other. So you don't need to worry about that."

When he had gone Merrilee sat, almost trembling. No, he didn't need to worry! But she did! She had spun her web of pretense so thin, drawn it out so far! Starting with a simple little fib about having a good time in New York, she had stretched it until the most important part of her life seemed to be built on make-believe. She was in near-panic. But she couldn't turn back now.

At noon she had lunch with Helen Brodie.

"Helen, I'm in an awful jam," she confessed.

"Let's hear," said Helen, her dark eyes sympathetic but twinkling. "I haven't forgotten what you did for me when Tom thought I'd been two-timing him."

Merrilee grinned, in spite of her own troubles. Her friendship with Helen was one of those wholehearted, dependable ones that persists even though circumstances make actual meetings rare. She told her frankly what had happened—what she had said to Harvey Tate.

"I get it," nodded Helen. "I'm the friend from Central City."

"Yes, but don't you go falling for Harvey, too. I'm warning you confidentially. He's good-looking, but he has a brother in prison, he killed his first wife, he's an habitual drunkard, and he cheats newsboys."

"Sure," Helen agreed. "And if you get him, I hope you'll reform him. Tom and I will be seeing you."

Merrilee arranged the date for a Saturday night. Starting out with Harvey, her heart beat with momentary triumph and uneasy excitement. Her plan was daring, wild.

"This girl we're going to meet," she said as they rode in the taxi, "thinks we're crazy about each other." She forced herself to laugh merrily. "It's a shame to disappoint her too badly."

"Every girl," said Harvey solemnly, "should be helped to keep her illusions. I'll do my best."

They met Helen and Tom at the Cloudline Club.

"Isn't it wonderful up here?" Helen exclaimed. "I think New York is grand. Oh, Merrilee, is Mr. Tate the man you've been writing me so much about?"

Merrilee tried to blush and, from the hot feeling of her cheeks, thought she succeeded.

Harvey had let his fingers touch hers and hold them lingeringly. At their table, he helped her to her seat with great tenderness. His eyes hovered upon her, hungrily, and she returned the gaze with a thumping, burning heart. She had to be careful lest he see at once how real it was!

Helen met her eyes and exchanged a surreptitious glance, which Harvey was intended to notice.

When they danced, he held her close—closer than he really had to

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—and once when Helen and Tom were near, and he was sure they could see, he let his lips brush her forehead with a gentle kiss.

It made her blood race with joy and pain. Oh, if only that fleeting touch of a kiss had been meant, instead of make-believe!

"Let's go out here a minute," he suggested.

They were near an open doorway to the walled terrace. Harvey was

He seized her in his arms, held her crushed close against him, kissed her soft, yielding lips. "Will you marry me, darling?" he whispered.

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playing his part well. This was a natural thing for two lovers to do.

With his arm about her waist, he led her out onto the terrace, like a balcony in the sky overlooking the lamp-sprinkled darkness of the city. In the distance was the river and the slowly moving lights of a boat. Boxed evergreens behind them screened them from the bright, open doorway to the dance floor.

A sudden, painful bit of logic flashed through Merrilee's mind. Out here, there was no need for Harvey to "act." He couldn't be seen. So he had come out for a respite.

But Harvey apparently didn't realize his opportunity. Instead of taking his arm from her waist, he tightened it, until they faced each other. He put his other arm around her, suddenly held her close to him, and pressed his lips against hers, in a long, deep kiss. It was so deep, so burning, that for a moment it felt real, and it took all her will power to hold her cool senses. She tried desperately to speak lightly.

"Thank you, sir. But you don't have to do that. Helen can't see us here. You can relax."

He released her from his arms. His willingness to let her go when there was no need to hold her somehow scraped cruelly against her already raw, taut nerves. Before she realized it, she had spoken again, bitterly:

"Besides, Nola mightn't like it!"

The instant the words were uttered, she was sorry. She hadn't put any pleasant bantering into her voice this time. Instead, she had let it show that she was hurt. Now Harvey would despise her.

But the look which came immediately to his face, for some reason, wasn't a look of disdain. It was a look of astonishment, then of partial understanding. Something like gladness hovered in his gray eyes.

"I'll have to confess about Nola," he said, slowly. "She's a very nice girl, but I only dated her because —— Well, look here, Merrilee! Your time was occupied with lots of other men. I knew that from what Nola told me, and from what you said yourself. I didn't want to presume on our fifty-fifty business relationship. You set the limits of it pretty clearly. But I thought if I went out with Nola now and then, you'd be along. And if I could only be around you more, I still had a vague hope that——" He hesitated.

Merrilee put her hand on his arm, clasped it. She looked up eagerly into his gray eyes, and the gladness that was hovering there seemed suddenly to have lit them, for they were glowing tenderly now.

"You had a hope that what?" she urged him.

He seized her in his arms, held her crushed close against him, kissed her soft, yielding lips.

"I hoped," he whispered, "that we could go on with our fifty-fifty plan—with a slight change, though. I'll pay all the expenses. You think up the ideas for games and things to pretend before your friends. You think up all that sort of thing, after we do one thing that I've thought up, darling."

"What is it, dearest?"

"That we get married. Will you?"

"Oh, Harvey, dearest. I thought that up long ago," she murmured.

"So did I—the first time I went out with you, sweetheart."

He kissed her again. Even if they hadn't been on the lofty terrace above the city's roofs, above the river and its slowly moving lights, she'd have felt that she was just as high, carried by her joyous, soaring heart.

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Orchid Girl

By Paula Rockwell

EVE HILTON, last season's darling of the stag line, danced to-night professionally at the Graysons' charity garden fête. The riotous applause of the socially prominent guests after her first dance assured her that she had caught on. But her heart was a bottomless pit of anguish. Young Doctor Wallace had kept his word. He hadn't come to her first public appearance, her triumph.

In floating rose-shaded chiffons and filmy veils Eve had drifted like a wraith blown by a breeze, out of black tree shadows on the terrace to an improvised stage of green velvet turf. Her eyes searched vainly for that tall, lithe figure. The moon spread silvery whiteness over the

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many rows of intimates in Paris gowns and faultless evening clothes, over the masses of flower beds, shrubs, and tinkling fountains.

In that silvery light, on the soft wings of music from a hidden orchestra, Eve danced. Like a spirit from another world. A deep hush. Wild applause.

To music like a precious memory, Eve in white, her hair sculptured gold, danced a love call. Her love call to Bob Wallace. Danced the glory and miracle of woman's love for man. Danced until that blasé crowd rose and cheered.

But even when she stood, surrounded by a worshiping group of friends, even when a famous producer offered her a thrilling connection with his Broadway revue, grief sheathed her in ice. Success without Bob's love was salt on her lips.

Well, she'd go to New York, work fiendishly, succeed lovelessly.

Then she saw him, his back against a stately elm outlined in colored lights. Magnificent-looking in his black-and-white. A fine-shaped head, broad-shouldered, with a gleaming smile that could melt a heart of iron. But Eve's heart wasn't iron; it was clay for him to mold. Her heart was beating crazily loud now in her ears as she met his eyes with a silent appeal. He bowed, moved toward her, then squared his shoulders and swung off toward the house.

"He can't do that to me," Eve sobbed inwardly. "He must understand. He shouldn't hate me now and avoid me like a plague. I'm no longer a rich, spoiled girl. He must know I'm dancing to-night for my bread and butter."

She ran swiftly away to escape the gayly possessive friends, and in spite of a gust of self-contempt—she, Eve Hilton, running after any man—darted past the swimming pool to overtake that hurrying figure.

Running fleetly, she remembered that other night when her world had glistened goldenly. At the house party of her cousin, Lucile, who had been disinherited for eloping with an artist, Ralph Lane, Eve had met Doctor Robert Wallace. When their eyes, hers warm, honey-brown, his deep, direct, black, locked, she had been drawn to him as on an invisible cord. Twenty-eight, vitally powerful, mouth resolute, smelling pleasantly of soap and antiseptic. Eve's heart thumped with a savage excitement. She wondered what was happening to her. Could it be love at first sight that exploded her emotions into small, bright stars of happiness like a bursting skyrocket?

Lucile had forewarned her. "Hands off, darling. Bob Wallace slave-drives himself in work. He's a college mate of Ralph's, with some queer complex about idle society girls. Something about the crack-up of his society-mad mother and his country-doctor father. Staying a bachelor's his hobby. Besides, your Cyril——"

Eve's lovely eyebrows contracted. "I told Cy last night it's all off between us until he cuts out drink. I won't marry a moneyed moron who boasts he's the drunkest drunk in our crowd."

Eve knew she was playing with fire that night of the house party when she climbed the bluff overhanging the lake, on the arm of the handsome young doctor.

Eve in a Paris gown grimaced at herself as he braced her for the last steep ascent, and said in a voice that was like a deep-toned carillon of bells: "The view's grand, but you'll ruin your silver slippers, and

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they must have cost you a whole week's salary."

So he thought her a working girl! Like most of the others at the house party.

Laughing inwardly Eve crushed the impulse to confess that she was the only child of John Hilton, inventor and multimillionaire, and supposed to have been engaged in her cradle to that wealthy playboy, Cyril Clarke.

"I've seen you somewhere before," Bob mused. "Did you sell me some things in Denton's basement?"

"No," Eve answered demurely, but her eyes danced mischievously. "Perhaps I waited on you in the five-and-ten."

On a rustic bench on the hilltop Eve and Bob talked. He spoke briefly of his hospital work, shyly of his ambitions. She said her mother had died when she was a tot, but her father was a grand pal. Lately, he hadn't seemed like himself. Weak heart. She worried.

Suddenly Eve was startled by a fierce new longing. She ached to be held close in Bob's arms.

"Let's go back and dance, Bob," she suggested overcarelessly.

"It's stuffy inside. All that gang. Besides, I don't dance. Haven't time. Work all day and sometimes all night."

She chattered to ease her wild longing. "Father says I danced before I walked. He let me have the best teachers. Paris, Petrograd. But he always hoots when I say I'd dance for my supper if I ever had to earn my own——" She stopped, furious at her slip.

He stared at her for a painful moment, his mouth rigid. "Sorry," he muttered. "You must think me an utter ass." He lighted a cigarette, but didn't smoke; instead, ground it fiercely under his heel. "Of course, you're Eve Hilton, deb, John Hilton's daughter. Your picture's forever in the rotogravure. It always rested me the Sunday I didn't see your face. Pretty dumb of me to mistake you for a working girl. It'll be a grand joke to tell your friends. Five-and-ten! Just let me tell you, young lady," he went on savagely, "some of the nicest girls I've ever met work in the five-and-ten!"

"Bob," she pleaded, "I didn't mean—— Please——"

"Shall we go back?" His impersonal tone stung her.

She lashed out at him, "I hate you." But she knew it wasn't hate, but the magic fever of love pulsating through her veins. He was so attractive, so straight, so decent.

He eyed her coolly, but his jaw was a hard knot.

"Good. It won't be hard to teach myself to hate you, too, Miss Hilton. How you must be laughing up your sleeve at making a monkey of me!"

She wanted to cry out her love and longing. Instead, she stood up, her voice pointed icicles. "I'm going back to Lucile."

He stood up, too, and brought his stern young face close to hers. "Spoiled, pampered child. Used to getting your own way. Well, you're a stick of dynamite for a struggling young doctor like me. Labeled 'Dangerous—keep away.'"

The next instant she was swept roughly into his arms, and, her golden hair hardly reaching his shoulders, she felt herself lifted on tiptoe. He kissed her lips until they warmed under his. He kissed her again and again, not tenderly, but fiercely, until she hung limp in his arms.

"Let me go!" she stormed, and

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had never known such gnawing pangs of fury even while in that electric moment her heart beat in her throat like a trapped bird. Every pulse in her body sang in the ecstasy of love. She tore herself away and ran like the wind. Down the slope. Up the cottage steps—into Lucile's arms.

"I was just coming for you, Eve darling. Ralph's getting the car. The phone—your father——"

"Father! Not—dead. No! No!"

A month after that night Eve, ivory-pale in her white mourning sat huddled in the huge book-lined library with its soft tones of old mahogany furniture. She had just had two painful interviews, one with her father's laywer, who told gently that, when the creditors were satisfied, she would be penniless. The other with Cyril Clarke, in which she repeated her decision not to marry him until he forswore drink and his playboy habits and settled down as junior member of his father's law firm.

Cyril stood, balancing himself on unsteady legs. Medium height, too heavy for the middle twenties, uneasy mouth, bloodshot eyes. He smoked one cigarette after the other, and regarded her sulkily.

"That's crazy, Eve, a smoothie like you a professional dancer! You'll starve to death the first month."

"You know, Jacques said I ought to make dancing my career," Eve said quietly, but her hands worked nervously. "And old Orloff in Petrograd said the same. My first engagement's Thursday night—the Graysons' charity garden party."

The days that she must live through before her début as a professional dancer crawled for Eve, in spite of unending hours of practice.

Sometimes she broke into fits of wild weeping for her father. Once—twice she longed unbearably to see Bob Wallace. Beyond a formal note of sympathy and a box of her favorite deep-purple violets, he had completely ignored her.

She wanted to see him so much that, one afternoon, humbling herself, she phoned his office.

He was at the Carlton, the suite of the great Viennese nerve specialist, Doctor——

Eve didn't try to catch the name. She would wait in the Carlton lobby. She must see Bob, tell him she was sorry, confess.

After an hour of waiting she saw him step out of the elevator.

"Hello, Bob!"

"Eve! Miss Hilton! Wish I could stop, but I'm late now at the hospital." He spoke pleasantly, but so distantly.

Eve, hurt to the quick, would have fled, but she saw one hand crush his soft gray hat. That encouraged her. He wasn't so stony indifferent, after all.

"I phoned your office. I wanted to tell you——" She forced her eyes to his face. A muscle twitched in his cheek.

"There's nothing to tell. It was just my fool mistake. I've always believed your world and mine don't

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mix. I'm glad I found out the truth so soon, before——" He was politely edging away from her.

"Bob," she pleaded, her heart emptied of hope. He was so remote. How could she reach him? Make him understand that, out of a world of men, her heart had chosen him for her man? "Bob, I'm dancing to-morrow night at Mrs. Grayson's."

"Yes, for the Children's Hospital. I bought tickets, but I won't be there." He moved away a few steps, then wheeled and said furiously: "Please, Eve, stay out of my life. I'm a workingman. You're an orchid girl. Besides, I'm not the marrying sort."

Eyes burning with angry, unshed tears, Eve stood until he disappeared through the revolving door. Then her firm chin lifted. "Some day, Doctor Wallace, when my name's in electric lights a foot high, I'll send a gorgeous check to your hospital and you'll be proud of me."

This promise gave her courage when she sped after Bob into the Grayson house and glimpsed the doctor in the library, shaking hands with old Colonel Grayson.

She'd wait in the hall, pocket her pride, tell Bob she now was poor as a church mouse.

A loud voice behind her demanded, "Where've you been all my life, darling?" And his eyes pin points, his mouth working restlessly, Cyril Clarke caught her to him.

She tried to draw away. "Cy, please."

"I want to talk to you, Eve. Come in here." Gripping her shoulder, he half dragged her across the hall.

Eve struggled mentally. If she went with Cy, she'd miss Bob and a chance for a magic moment together and a word of explanation. If she refused Cy, he was capable of making a rowdy scene. He hadn't been drinking. Of that she was quite sure. But he seemed different. Excited, restless, determined. Better hear what he had to say.

"All right, Cy," Eve said wearily, following him into a near-by room. "Make it snappy. Mrs. Grayson may want me."

"Tell her to go chase herself," he said rudely. "You're my girl, and father's sore as the deuce about your dancing to-night. He's sick in bed—pretty close to the end, I'm afraid. He wants to see you right away. He sent you this, and says I'm to bring you to him."

He thrust into her hand a ring with a magnificent pear-shaped ruby, its deep-red fires outlined in the cold gleam of diamonds. Eve had seen the ring often on the hand of Cy's now-dead mother, and knew it belonged to the world-famous Clarke collection of rubies.

Cyril snatched her sickeningly close, and tried to kiss her.

With a wrench she was halfway across the room, but he caught her and tightened his hold. "That's no way for a girl to treat the man she's promised to marry. Anyhow, let's get going to father. He may not live the night through, and he wants to tell you about a promise he made your father."

Eve's eyes brimmed with tears. Her father! Never in all her life had she felt so desperately alone. If only she could talk to her father, tell him—it might ease her aching heart to talk about him to Cy's father, who had been one of his closest friends.

"Just a second, Cy. I want to speak to—a friend."

She stepped out into the hall, ahead of Cy. Bob, hat in hand,

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He moved away a few steps, then wheeled and said furiously: "Please, Eve, stay out of my life. I'm a workingman. You're an orchid girl. Besides, I'm not the marrying sort."

was still chatting with Colonel Grayson near the front door. If only Bob would look at her, she'd ask him to give her a mere five minutes alone in the music room.

But, eyes averted, he bowed

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gravely as she let Cy hurry her past him out the front door and into his glittering sports roadster. As Cy's car sped into the drive, Eve glimpsed Bob settle himself behind the wheel of his little flivver with its top folded back and wished achingly she were beside him instead of at Cy's elbow.

Eve sank deep into her sad musing and answered Cy's excited chatter only with monosyllables. She rarely smoked, but to-night, in her keyed-up state, she accepted a cigarette from Cy, and was glad she was smoking when he begged for a kiss.

They were racing over a long, narrow bridge when, glancing about nervously, she asked: "Cy, haven't you missed the turn in the road? This isn't the way to your home."

He laughed excitedly and squeezed her arm.

"I thought you'd be too sleepy to notice, angel. We're heading across the county border. I know a J. P. who'll marry us to-night."

Eve swallowed. Her mouth felt dry. But she wondered at her composure. "Don't be silly, Cy. I can't marry you to-night. Bob——"

"Shut up," he said roughly. "If you want to live, you'll marry me to-night, or I'll shoot this bus straight into the nearest pole. You've fooled around with me long enough. I've decided to-night's the night. Choose. Either a marriage or a funeral."

Eve was silent. She realized it wouldn't help to plead or coax with Cy in his present mood. But she felt numbly bewildered. She had known him since childhood. Good-tempered, easy-going, the butt of every sharper in town. But never rough, masterful, desperate like this.

Wild thoughts shot through her mind. She could scream for help. But the road was frighteningly lonely. Patches of black woods, open stretches of stubble. Not a car had passed them.

She could pull the emergency brake and leap out of the car. But, likely enough, this strange, reckless Cy would jump out and drag her back. Perhaps he had a gun and might kill them both. She had read of desperate men committing just such unthinkable crimes. Her safest bet was to appear cool and pleasant, and not cross Cy in any way. Maybe she could escape somehow at the J. P.'s.

"Was that all make-believe about your father, Cy?" she asked, nicely casual.

He chuckled. "Sure; dad starts to-night in the yacht for Florida."

Fury seethed within her. So he had trapped her through her love for her father. She had always liked Cy in a sisterly fashion, felt pity for the spoiled, self-indulgent only child of a self-absorbed father. Now she hated Cy wildly. Deftly, unnoticed, she dropped the ruby ring into his coat pocket.

Aloud she said with a mirthless laugh: "So you're kidnaping me. Some headlines for the newspapers!"

To herself she vowed savagely, "I'll never marry you, Cy Clarke, to-night or any night. I'd kill myself first."

Cy laughed triumphantly. "That won't bother us any. We'll meet father and the yacht in New York and have months of honeymoon, my sweet."

He slowed the car down and, with the air of a conquering hero, reached over and swept her fiercely close, kissing her savagely, insultingly, as she never had been kissed before.

Outraged, ashamed, she pushed

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him away and beat upon him with her fists.

She panted, "Don't touch me again, or I'll jump out."

"Sorry, Eve," he apologized, penitent. "I'll behave. Just lost my head thinking that in a few hours now you'll belong all to me, forever and keeps. You're so beautiful. You've always had me eating out of your hand."

They rode the next few miles in tense silence. Eve relived that snatched moment of bliss on the moonlit bluff. Bob's kisses! Her first kiss of real love! Then, her lips, her heart, her entire body had awakened in the dizzying ecstasy of those kisses. Now she scrubbed frantically with her handkerchief to wipe off Cy's shameful kisses, until her lips felt like a slash of burning red.

"Cy," she begged, "please turn back. I can't marry you. There's some one else."

But Cy wasn't listening. His eyes were riveted on the car reflector.

"My Heaven," he gasped suddenly, "we are being followed, chased! I thought back there I heard a car. Sure's anything, they're after me. What'll I do?" he moaned.

Eve jerked upright in shuddering terror. "Who's after you? What do you mean?"

Then, when he didn't answer, but continued to mutter incoherently, she shook his arm desperately, trying not to scream. "Tell me, Cy!"

He mumbled: "The Dennison gang—Baby-face Morton. I got in wrong with him at a hand bookie's. He said he'd get me."

Eve flashed a glance through the rear window. A car was tearing around a turn in the road.

"What'll they do, Cy? To us? To me?" she demanded, amazed at her controlled voice.

"Kidnap us," he babbled. "Hold us for ransom, perhaps torture us, burn out our eyes as they did to the Redmond brothers, kill us."

Eve sat motionless. She fought panic-terror down. She felt incased in the ice of fear. Too numb to move or think or speak. She was still so young. Life was sweet. So much ahead of her. Success, perhaps even love. But death, if she couldn't have Bob, wouldn't be so bad. Anyhow, she'd never ask mercy of those gangsters. She'd die game, with her boots on, as her darling good sport of a father often said.

A half sob burst from Cy's lips. "They're gaining on me! Egad, why didn't I pack my rod to-night? I could shoot it out." The next instant he burst into a string of oaths. "So help me, out of gas! I told Robinson to fill the tank when I ran the car into our garage this afternoon. He'll get his if——" The car slithered to a standstill.

The pursuing auto shot around another turn in the road and slid to a stop a few feet ahead of Cy's roadster.

Cy dropped his head on his hands, which still gripped the wheel, and sobbed hysterically. "Oh, Eve, if only I hadn't dragged you into this!"

Eve glanced at him contemptuously. He was yellow through and through. Chicken-hearted! Though terror froze her and her imagination tortured her, she said: "Brace up. The worst hasn't happened yet."

Tormented by horrid visions of being bound and gagged, she glued her eyes to the door of that other car. In another breath, now, out would leap a gang of masked bandits with machine guns, and she and Cy——

To her gasped amazement, only a single figure emerged and ran fleetly

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Bob raced to Eve's side of the car, ripped open the door, and had her fiercely tight in his arms before he exploded: "What do you mean, running off like this with my wife, Clarke?"

toward Cy's car. But not before her eyes, startled wide open with surprise, her thudding heart, her hurrying pulses told her who it was. Bob! Hatless, his face in the moonlight stern and grim as death. He raced to Eve's side of the car, ripped open the door, and had her fiercely

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tight in his arms before he exploded: "What do you mean, running off like this with my wife, Clarke?"

Cy gaped. "Your wife? I didn't know—— She only said ——" Then relief made him blubber: "I thought—gangsters—kidnapers—out of gas."

Bob, with Eve close in his hard but tender clasp, hurried toward his roadster. Over his shoulder he flung back: "Your car's safely off the road. Sleep off your nerve jag. I'll send you gas from the first station we pass."

Bob laid Eve gently back against the seat cushions and covered her with a robe before he slid under the wheel.

"All set?" he asked matter-of-factly, but the concern in his manner made happiness pour through her veins like golden fire.

She sighed contentedly. To have Bob save her like this was more thrilling than the most exciting movie rescue she'd ever seen.

"You're not to talk," he ordered with a quick assumption of his professional manner. "I'll do that for both of us. Close your eyes and try to untie your nerves."

She tried to obey. But it was too magically wonderful to be speeding under a deep-blue sky pricked with yellow stars, beside Bob, so magically near that her hand could, and did, touch the edge of his coat. She sighed again like a happy child and nestled her head in the cushions.

A lilt of sheer joy warmed her voice when she broke the silence. "How did you happen to come for me, Bob?"

He looked down at her wind-blown golden head, frowning. "Spoiled girl. Must have your own way. I told you not to talk. Well, if you must know, I didn't like the looks of your boy friend when he was hurrying you out to his car. I know something of playboy Clarke's habits. He was all doped up tonight, so when I saw him start off at that breakneck speed, I had to put an interne on an urgent case of mine and waste some perfectly good time on a wild-goose chase after you." His eyes twinkling down at her softened the harshness of his words and manner.

Silence. A wild elation thrilled through her. Bob must care or he wouldn't have taken the trouble to save her from Cy.

She leaned forward suddenly to stare at him. "But, Bob," she began, her heart a singing bird, "you told Cy I was your wife."

He lighted a cigarette, and in the flare she saw his mouth thin into a hard line. "Don't let that upset you. I had to give that poor sap a jolt or he'd have tried to put up a fight for you. But I told you before you'd make havoc in the life of a man who's devoting himself to service." He took a furious puff at his cigarette, inhaled deeply, then said in the tone of a person trying to convince himself: "I wouldn't want you for a wife if you were the last girl on earth. Not that I'm conceited enough," he added quickly, "to think you'd have me."

"Stranger things than that have happened," she said meekly, and wished this ride through the perfect summer night would last forever.

Neither spoke again until a few yards ahead of them loomed up a gas station.

"It'd do that fellow good to stay there all night and sleep it off," Bob muttered, then gave the attendant explicit directions about the location of Cy's car.

Bob said, as if to himself, suddenly: "A girl like you should al-

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ways wear orchids and ride in limousines." He shot the car ahead in a sudden burst of speed and lighted another cigarette, with unsteady fingers, Eve noticed.

She laughed, and the silver sound of her laugh seemed to irritate Bob. He glanced at her sharply. "You find me quite a joke, don't you? Mistaking porcelain for crockery."

With a shy, sweet abandon she caressed his hand on the wheel and had the satisfaction of seeing his face quiver.

"A very pleasant joke, Bob, and we need jokes and fun to help us in this tough old world, don't we?" she asked in her most serious, little-girl manner.

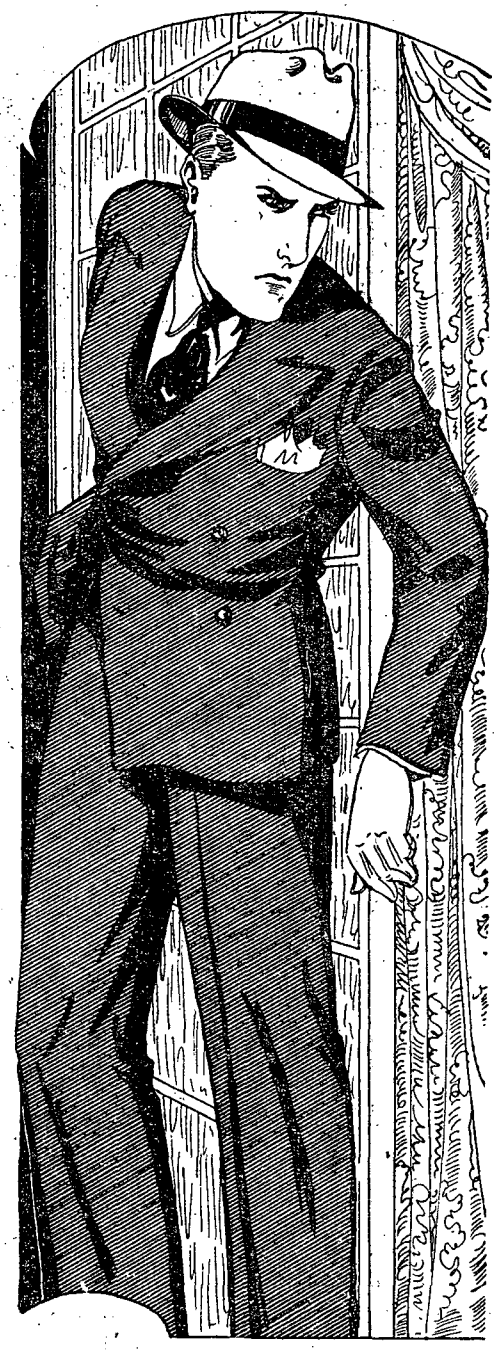
"Well, you don't need to draw a diagram of me making a fool of myself again over you," he said haltingly, as if he didn't believe his own words. "I'll do nicely without you in my life." Expertly he avoided a deep rut in the road. "You're a golden girl, and I'd burn my fingers if I touched you."

She drew her fingers swiftly, provocatively across his lips. "There, did that burn you?" she demanded, then sighed and asked in a low, shaken voice, "Why do we have to hurt each other every time we're together?"

Bob lighted another cigarette, inhaled deeply, then flung it into the darkness. His voice was hard, clipped. "I've put up a tough fight with myself since I met you. That night on the bluff I thought you and I—— But now I've got all that licked. I have no time for girls, no time for anything but my work."

He flashed her a glance, and his eyes told her something that his lips denied, something that made a wild surge of joy beat through her.

Both sat very quiet, his shoulders brushing hers, until the roadster



"Some trick you two played on me," cried Clarke. "Your wife, eh? Well, that's a dirty lie. She's my girl. If I don't get her, you won't." He swung about, a small automatic pointed at Bob.

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swerved into her driveway. Stepping from the car, she suddenly stumbled. Everything went black before her. She would have fallen but for Bob's outstretched arms. He caught her and carried her, soft, yielding, fragrant, to the bronze-grilled door. He made a move to

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set her down, but she clung to him like a frightened child.

"Please, Bob, don't leave me. I'm all alone, and I feel so—funny."

"Where are the servants?"

"Dismissed."

He placed her like something fragile on a couch in the mellow-lighted library, and drew up a chair beside her.

Through the gray veil of his cigarette smoke he said: "Take it easy, Eve. This has been quite an evening for you." He mused, "Some palace, this."

"I was born here. It hurts to leave it."

"Read that in the papers. Bunk, of course."

She felt his eyes probe hers when she answered steadily: "Nothing left. But no debts. I'm on my own. A professional dancer from now on." She smiled bitterly.

He stared, incredulous. "A society girl's whim, a dancing career."

"Earn my way with these." She thrust out small feet in silver slippers.

Grudgingly he said, "You have bewitching feet, Eve."

She laughed, a bit wearily. "My face isn't so bad, either, when you get used to it." Then added indifferently, "I've had an offer to dance in a Broadway revue."

"Eve Hilton in a Broadway revue," he scoffed.

His mockery filled her with fury. How dared he laugh at her?

Their glances crossed, and his face sharpened with pain, his handsome mouth set stubbornly, told her that which made her heart throb to an ecstatic tempo.

She jumped up. "Must phone, before my New Yorker leaves for the train. Excuse me. Won't be long."

But she was. Bob had smoked an unbroken chain of cigarettes before she trailed back, white-faced, eyes dark-ringed.

Neither spoke for a moment.

Out of that quiet, like a hoarse horn out of a fog, a voice from a French window in the sun room behind them startled them both to their feet.

"Some trick you two played on me." One hand behind him, the other clutching the window frame, Cyril Clarke stood, wavering. His eyes were glazed; his mouth worked convulsively. He slurred his words.

"Your wife, eh? Well, that's a dirty lie. She's my girl. If I don't get her, you won't."

He swung about, a small automatic pointed at Bob.

There was a terrible, panic-stricken moment, then Eve leaped forward. "No, no, Cy! I love him!" A second of hesitation, then: "I told you I couldn't marry you. There was some one else—Bob. He's my husband!" She flung herself between the two men.

With a jerk Bob thrust Eve aside, caught Cy's wavering arm, slipped the gun into his own pocket, and knocked the dope-filled youth flat. When, moaning and cursing, Cyril rose, Bob, with a few swift blows, rushed him through the window and out into the clump of bushes below.

"I hate to beat up a poor sap like that. He's ready for a sanitarium. Yet it had to be done," he remarked evenly, but his mouth was steel-hard.

With a sobbing breath, Eve crumpled into a chair, her face in her hands.

"I was so afraid—he'd kill you," she quavered.

Bob laughed. "Not with those

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shaking hands. I was afraid you would——"

The mantel clock filled the room with its tickling.

"Eve," Bob said, his hands clenched, as though words locked behind his lips were being forced from him. "I can't—I won't love you. You'd be a most exciting extravagance for an ambitious young doctor. But, oh, my darling"—his voice broke suddenly—"I can't live without you."

He swept her close to him, and his lips pressed hers, satiny, berry-red, yielding. In the glorious magic of that kiss she was thrilled with an ecstasy that she thought belonged only to the gods.

Her arms crept up around his neck. She kissed him and gave her heart into his trust.

"You won't always be a struggling doctor, dear," she said softly. He bent his head and rained kisses on her spun-gold hair, on the Cupid's hollow in her throat, her hands, her mouth, exquisite, adorable, fragrant as a rose leaf. "I'll earn with my dancing."

"Not when you're my wife, beloved." Gently he pushed her toward the door. "Phone your New York man it's all off."

"But, Bob——" she pleaded.

He drew her into his arms and kissed her until rapture infolded her like a cloak. "I may never have much money, my love, but I can't let my wife dance for money."

"For love, then. I'll dance my love for you, free," Eve said between a laugh and a sob. "I phoned him 'no' already. Said I intended to marry."

"Cy?"

She shook her head.

"You." Her eyes were adoring him. "I read somewhere, when something you want is passing you by, run after it. So I ran after you, with my love."

Bob laughed joyously. "I did some pretty tall running after you to-night, my darling."

She clung to him. She was where she had longed to be. Closely held in his arms, lips upon lips.

A small, quivering sigh escaped her as he released her for a moment. Then he crushed her to him again, and set his lips on hers in a kiss that lifted her to dizzying heights of ecstasy.

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Heartless Flirt

By Ives Tudor

REINE, haven't you anything to tell me?" Carl Trueman asked in a strained voice.

"Only that I had a grand week in town and bought scads of clothes," Reine laughed impishly up at him.

"Why didn't you answer my letters and telegrams?"

"Heavens!" The black lashes flew wide over dark eyes in genuine astonishment. "It took every spare minute I had to read less than half of them." She softened the blow. "It was dear of you to send them—and the flowers."

"You promised me an answer when you got back," he continued grimly.

"You made that suggestion," she denied. "I didn't promise anything."

"See here, Reine!" His light-blue eyes snapped, displaying temper. "How long do you intend keeping this up? You've the most notorious reputation of flirt by now. Every unattached male in Crest Cove is mad about you, and a few married ones as well. I'm mad about you, but I'm not the kind of a man to be led around by the nose."

Reine sighed dismally, drawing

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down the corners of her lovely red lips. For the first time in weeks she felt free to walk where she pleased, knowing that Paul Cartier wouldn't leap out at her from the oddest places, shouting childish threats to kill himself unless she married him. And now Carl was spoiling everything!

"I hoped for a breathing spell now that Père Cartier has dragged his neurotic offspring back to France," she sighed, dropping her small head, its lovely wealth of hair as black and sleek as the skin of a wet seal. "I do wish you'd stop being serious, Carl. I'm not in love with you or with any one. And I won't marry you for your money."

His laugh was harsh enough to draw her startled gaze.

"You may change your mind when the new prosecuting attorney starts in. He threatens to put your stepdad in the bread line or behind bars."

Reine stopped and swung squarely to face him. Her cheeks were scarlet with anger. Small hands clenched and thumped the air.

"He's an idiot! Sam Hollis isn't crooked. He helps put men into public office because he believes in them, and not for personal gain."

"The prosecutor doesn't think so. He says——"

"I know what he says," she interrupted sharply. "I've listened to his broadcasts. His official investigations will prove him wrong."

"He's after the machine that Sam helped—well, the political machine that it has taken years to build up. I hope they take the meddling fool for a ride," he finished viciously.

"You're talking like a dime thriller, Carl."

She began to hum a gay song and started across the lawn to join the laughing group on the terrace.

Suddenly the song died on her lips; the power to move seemed to desert her. She was conscious of nothing but the tall, broad-shouldered man with the slim hips and trim build of an athlete who stood talking to Francine Adair.

While she stared at him, he smiled, his teeth showing dazzling white in contrast to the deep bronze of his face.

Life flowed back into her limbs. She moved forward into the sun-patched shade of silver poplars, looking dainty and lovely in the coral-colored chiffon frock, a floppy white garden hat dangling from one hand.

"Who is that man?" she asked Carl.

He followed her gaze and laughed as though at a secret joke.

"That, my sweet, is Bart Anders, the new prosecuting attorney."

Her breath caught in her throat. "What is he doing here?"

"I wouldn't know!" He laughed derisively. "He came here the day after you left for town, rented the Miller bungalow and joined the crowd. His mother and Mrs. Lamson were schoolgirl friends."

"Does he know that Sam lives in Crest Cove?"

"He's after information, if that's what you mean. Good thing Sam is staying in town with dad for a while."

Amy Lamson called out a gay greeting.

"Reine, darling, so glad you're back!" She added, "You look just like a lovely little girl standing there."

"As if she didn't know it," Francine Adair flung in tartly, drawing a few scattered snickers.

Francine had lost Carl Trueman to Reine and resented it.

Reine scarcely heard her. She

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was staring into the bluest eyes she had ever seen, smudged with thick black lashes. She felt the blood mounting to her face.

"Darling," Amy Lamson continued, "I want you to meet our new prosecuting attorney and the son of my dearest friend. Bart, come here."

He was beside her now, meeting her wide-eyed gaze. Something flamed between them—something so thrillingly beautiful that it quivered through her like a song; his look was like wings beating in her heart, brushing against her eyelids, lingering on her lips.

"Now, Bart," Mrs. Lamson warned half seriously after the introduction, "don't lose your heart to her. She's a heartless little flirt."

"Be careful, Bart," Francine advised, lowering white lids over crafty gray eyes. "She's the daughter of King Graft Hollis."

"Francine!" Mrs. Lamson rebuked sternly.

But Francine ignored the rebuke.

"Paul Cartier, the diamond baron's son, tried to commit suicide over her," she continued relentlessly.

"That's not true," Carl defended. "The darn fool got drunk and fell out of the canoe. A man intent on self-destruction doesn't yell bloody murder to be saved."

"Carl thinks the queen can do no wrong," Francine smirked slyly.

But the blue eyes watching Reine had suddenly lost their wrath and become coldly impersonal. Terror crept through her—a strange, devastating terror that was an icy flood in her veins, a flaming torment in her brain. Her hands pressed over her heart in a protecting gesture, but his frozen look pierced the barrier like stabbing knives.

"So you're Reine Hollis," he stated, unsmiling.

"Sam is my stepfather," she explained. "My name is Rogers."

His shrug was slightly contemptuous, as though to say: "It's all the same breed."

Some one tittered. Her dark eyes lost their velvety softness and swept the circle, silencing mirth. Red lips tightened angrily, emphasizing the determined chin cleft by a dimple that found its mate in her left cheek.

"Sam is the best father a girl ever had." Her voice quivered with anger.

"I admire loyalty in any one," Bart replied politely.

Their eyes clung, and he took an involuntary step forward. Francine saw and hissed spitefully:

"Remember Mrs. Lamson's warning! She's a heartless flirt!"

For the first time the coined expression, given Reine shortly after her return from Europe a year before, ceased to be amusing. She had gained the reputation of flirt because few men could resist the lure of her vibrant, dusky beauty. And because she had flung herself with the innocent abandon of a happy child into a round of pleasure with each new, interesting male, and tiring of their insistence, had sent them away bewildered and decidedly disappointed, she had been termed heartless.

Francine bobbed forward and clutched Bart's arm with working fingers. Her foxlike face was flushed a mottled red. Eyes gleamed maliciously through narrowed slits.

"Be careful of her, Bart."

Carl's derisive laughter broke the tension.

"You sound like a black witch on a black, black night, Fran."

"She is a flirt. You can't deny it!"

"*Tch-tch!*" Carl admonished.

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"Your nasty little brain is a gooey mess of jealousy, my pet."

Reine's smile was tremulous, her dark eyes wide and serious.

"I'm not as bad as Fran paints me, Mr. Anders."

He smiled thinly. "Not being curious, I'll probably never know."

Reine flushed and moved stiffly away to join the small group near the lily pond. Carl followed.

"Darling"—Pamela Voight smiled sympathetically—"you'll never dangle Bart's scalp at your belt."

"And it's such a nice dark one," Dodo Wilson sighed dolefully, shaking her blond head.

Les Whitney grunted angrily, running nervous fingers through his thatch of straw-colored hair.

"You blondes talk as though Reine were an aborigine head-hunter."

Les had been in love with Reine since their romper days. His devotion was laughed at, even by himself. Only his kind brown eyes carried a hint of pain when he looked at her.

Reine's dark head lifted in a challenge.

"I've never lost a man yet."

It was sheer bravado, that remark. She could have added in all truth that until now, she had never intended any man to fall in love with her. They just did, spoiling everything.

"Don't break a perfect record by tackling the iron man," Carl advised sagely.

A warm glow filled her heart.

"You mean he's not interested in any girl?"

"He's a confirmed woman-hater," said Carl.

"Nope," Les denied quickly. "He's only shy of girls with daring reputations. A flirtatious lady ruined his brother Dave's political future some years ago. She forgot to tell Dave that she was married. Her husband raised a fuss, sued Dave and all that. It drove him out of politics. He died in a plane crash last year."

"That's why Bart went into politics," Dodo added her bit, cheerfully. "He swore he'd get the men who framed Dave. He blamed no other than——"

"Shut up, Dodo!" Pamela nudged her tiny companion.

"Blamed Sam, you mean?" Reine finished cleverly. "That is silly!" A dangerous gleam blazed in her dark eyes. "I'll make him eat out of my hand before I am through."

"Be careful," Carl warned. "Those quiet fellows have dispositions like Indians."

"Not jealous by any chance, Carl?" she teased.

"Sure I am. You're going to marry me, my sweet. I always get what I want."

"So do I," she snapped pertly, walking away.

Reine had made a habit of taking her early-morning swim long before the rest of Crest Cove stirred from bed. She loved the fresh, dewy sweetness of the morning, the invigorating cold of the lake water, rippling into pure gold where the sun touched it. But most of all she

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loved the solitude, the feeling of belonging wholly to herself.

She stood for a moment on the bank, a scarlet patch of color against the rose-gold of the morning. Then she plunged in and swam for the raft, climbing over the edge just as a dark head bobbed up on the opposite side. Bart Anders grinned at her.

"Good morning," he greeted her easily.

She drew a long breath and laughed. "You startled me. I never expected any one else to be swimming at this hour."

He drew his bronzed body, garbed in black trunks, up beside her. They sat rocking in rhythm to the raft's movements, staring at each other with the frankness of children.

"Aren't you up early?"

She shook her red-capped head. "I always swim at this time. I love it. It's so still and beautiful. I feel as though I'm the only person in the world."

"I know. It's a grand feeling, isn't it?"

He stood up quickly. Etched against the background of brilliant morning sky and dark water, head flung high, he looked like a young god. Great muscles rippled easily and gracefully beneath his bronzed skin.

He stared down at her, and her heart cried out against the barrier between them. He would never trust her because of Sam, and because some one had been cruel and jealous enough to brand her a flirt. She shivered, but not from cold.

"Hadn't you better take your swim and go in?" he asked matter-of-factly.

She jumped to her feet. With quick, graceful movements she reached the springboard, leaped high in the air and dived.

She swam back, laughing with the sheer joy of living. Her next attempt was a perfect swan dive. He applauded heartily as she climbed back on the float and rested on her back, arms tucked beneath her head.

"You can dive," he complimented. "I had hoped to win the Crest Cove championship this year. Now I shan't even compete for it."

"You're being nice, Mr. Anders. I didn't think you could be."

She was sorry the moment she had said it. The friendly laughter left his eyes, which became gleaming disks of blue ice. His strong mouth stretched to a hard, straight line.

"We can't gain anything by useless discussion"—curtly. "You are privileged to live your life, I live mine."

"But you're wrong about Sam, Mr. Anders—wrong about me, too. Only I don't suppose that's important."

She hated the lie. It was important, what he thought about her—the only important thing in the world.

"You're either very clever or very stupid, Miss Rogers," he flung in with spirit.

She bridled. "Sam hasn't earned the things you've said about him." She shielded her betraying eyes with one hand. "Neither have I."

"I'm not aware of having discussed you with any one."

"No. But you've listened to silly gossip. It's the same thing."

"You call a broken-hearted boy's attempt at suicide 'silly gossip'?"

Reine raised herself on an elbow. One slender hand reached out, the fingers closing over his strong brown wrist. There was appeal in her eyes and voice, and the quaver of tears.

"I'll tell you the truth," she promised. "I met Paul Cartier in France just before setting sail for home. He

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followed me here. I never pretended to care for him—for any man. One night, Paul got drunk at a party and took a canoe out on the lake. It overturned; he couldn't swim. Fortunately, a couple in another canoe heard him cry out. He swore he tried to kill himself because of me. It was his way of striking back."

"Very convincing!"

She straightened, all the lovely color draining from her face.

"There have been, and are, too many men in love with you for you not to have earned the reputation of 'heartless flirt.' Men need encouragement before making fools of themselves."

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"You don't believe me?"

"Frankly, no. There have been, and are, too many men in love with you for you not to have earned the reputation of 'heartless flirt.' Men need encouragement before making fools of themselves."

"How can you be so cruel?"

She couldn't keep the quiver of heartbreak out of her voice. Tears glittered on her lashes. Small hands pressed against her throat to ease the pain there. She loved him; she knew that now. His look, filled with curious amusement, was like the prick of thorns in her flesh. He haunted her consciousness like a ghost, making her want the feel of his strong arms about her, the presence of his lips on her own.

"Oh, you're cruel!" she repeated, hardly conscious that she had moved nearer, that her bare white shoulder brushed against the bronzed flesh of his arm.

His smile was crooked. "I'm immune to your charms, Miss Rogers. Tell Sam Hollis that. Tell him he'll never trick me as he tricked Dave."

The words reacted on Reine like a physical blow. She cringed, staring at him with tear-dimmed eyes. He couldn't have said that horrible thing! But he had.

Then fury swept her, stinging through her pain like the lash of a whip, driving her to hurt him as she was hurt.

"You dare accuse me of such despicable cheapness?" she choked. "Did it ever occur to you that Dave Anders wasn't framed? That when he was caught with another man's wife in his arms, he lied to save himself?"

The blow struck home. He winced as from the touch of scorching irons. Pain twisted his face into a white, tortured mask, filling Reine with a gloating, savage joy.

He looked at her. She clenched white lids over stricken dark eyes to blot out the misery she saw mirrored in those blue depths. She wanted to take back that awful accusation, to beg his forgiveness. Most of all she wanted to put her young arms around him, to steady his shaking lips with her own.

"You wouldn't have said that if you'd known Dave."

"You gave me no benefit of the doubt."

"I'm sorry. Let's call quits."

That meant he didn't want to see her again. She clenched white lips to strangle back a cry. Her next words came out involuntarily:

"Of course if you're afraid——"

He interrupted sharply, "Afraid of what?"

"Of me. But that's silly! Only men with red blood in their veins need be afraid of women."

They stood up, and for a long moment gaze met gaze. He reached out and caught her wrist, pulling her close to him. Their young bodies touched and flames coursed through her own, leaping to life in her eyes.

With an abrupt gesture, he moved away to the edge of the raft. She whirled and made for the other side, hitting the water in a clean dive. She swam, still under water, until her lungs threatened to burst, and bright-colored spots danced before her eyes. She never wanted to come up. If only she could go on like this forever, losing herself in the cool green depths of the water, becoming a part of it.

But the instinct of youth and health sent her gasping to the surface—and found her almost in the circle of Bart's arms. He gripped her shoulder, towed her shoreward

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until his feet rested on the bottom.

"Dear Heaven!" he breathed in quick relief. "When you didn't come up I thought—well, all kinds of horrible things."

The tone of his voice made her heart sing, and her quick laughter rippled upward on a note of exultation.

"You adorable thing!"

His strong arms swept her close. His lips crushed her own in a kiss that lasted through thrilling eternities, and rocked the world about her. She clung to him, afraid to believe that this beautiful thing had happened to them. But it had. There was reality in his arms straining her close, and in the hot pressure of his lips on her own.

The day was far too long for Reine. Bart was closeted with his campaign manager, and she wouldn't see him until later, at Pamela Voight's party. She had promised to go with Carl and reluctantly kept the promise.

The dance was in full swing by the time Carl and Reine arrived. Mrs. Voight had hired an expensive orchestra for the occasion. They paused on the porch.

"Um, lovely!" Reine enthused, tossing slim arms high, slender body swaying gracefully before Carl.

In the beam of moonlight edged by the deep shadows of a vine-covered porch, she looked like a slim young goddess, the gown of white satin with silver threads through the weave, swirling about her silver-slippered feet.

Carl watched her, red head thrust forward, eager eyes engulfing her.

"You're beautiful!" he breathed hoarsely.

She stopped before him, sweet face lifted, only the image of Bart alive in her heart.

"Am I, Carl? Am I truly beautiful?"

It was a wistful cry. She wasn't thinking of the effect of her loveliness on Carl. She only wanted his assurance that in Bart's eyes she would be everything desirable.

Carl reached out and swept her into his arms, crushing the lovely gown carelessly, his lips closing down hard on her soft ones.

Stunned by surprise, she went limp for a moment. And in that moment, some one close by in the shadows struck a match and held it to a cigarette. In the flare, Reine caught Bart's searching glance, filled with a hint of mockery. The next instant the light faded out, and he was gone.

She fought like a wild thing in Carl's embrace. One small hand lashed out in a short arc and landed against his cheek before he would release her. Winged feet carried her into the house. Frantic eyes searched the room for Bart and couldn't find him.

An eager partner claimed her. She went from one to the other in rapid succession, answering questions she scarcely heard, laughing when they laughed. And all the time her heart was breaking, her eyes were searching despairingly.

The dance ended and Carl hurried up, one cheek suspiciously redder than the other.

"Reine, forgive me," he begged contritely. "You were so lovely—so tempting."

She stared at him as though he were a stranger. What he said didn't matter. Nothing mattered but Bart.

She swung about to leave him and came face to face with Bart, Francine clinging to his arm. Gowned in scarlet satin, her brown-haired, gray-eyed prettiness dimmed to

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nothing beside Reine's dusky loveliness.

"We can row up to Pirate's Rock for a picnic," Francine was saying. "I know the dearest spot, Bart, and we——"

"Oh, here you are," Reine said deliberately, dark eyes fastened on Bart's white, drawn face. "This is our dance, isn't it, Bart?"

The music began a slow waltz. Reine slipped into Bart's arms and caught the malignant look Francine bestowed upon her. Out of earshot, she whispered:

"I had to talk to you, Bart. I —I was afraid you wouldn't ask me to dance."

"I have good manners, even though my judgment is poor," he replied coldly, not looking at her.

They reached the open French doors leading to the veranda.

"Let's go outside. Please!" she coaxed when she read curt refusal in his eyes.

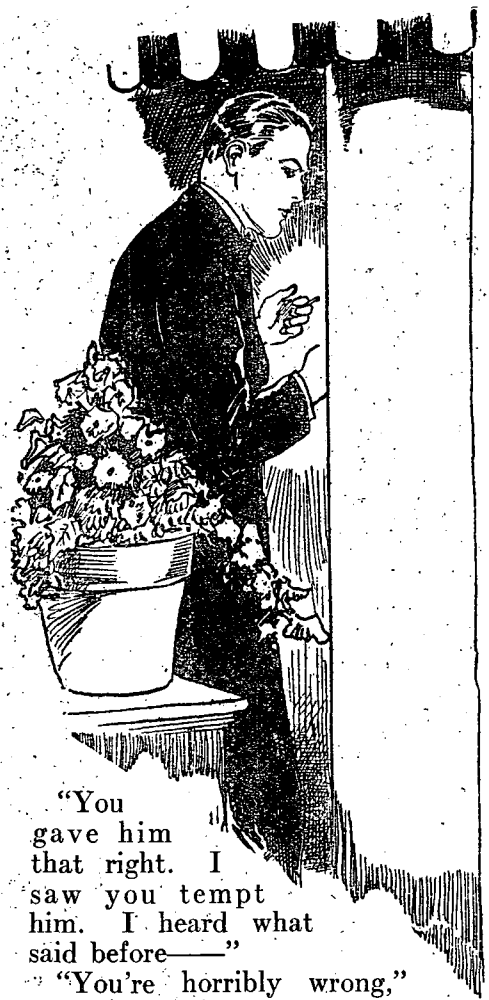
There was a full pale moon riding high in the star-studded sky, its image weaving and trembling in the smooth mirror of the lake that stretched away from the foot of the garden. It sifted through the screen of scarlet ramblers that trellised the far end of the porch. She maneuvered Bart to this spot, where shadows gave it mystery and a hint of romance.

He laughed bitterly. "You choose an ideal setting, Miss Rogers—moonlight, music, and a beautiful girl."

She pressed back against the ramblers, a blur of white against scarlet. One hand clutched the trellis for support, the other reached toward him in childish appeal.

"Bart, you must believe that Carl had no right to—to kiss me."

He stiffened. His voice quavered with something deeper than anger.



"You gave him that right. I saw you tempt him. I heard what said before——"

"You're horribly wrong," she broke in. She swung close to him, a vibrant spark of loveliness. One hand caught his shoulder, and she raised her face to his.

"I've never given any man but you the right to kiss me, Bart."

He caught her wrists and held her away from him.

"You'll not trick me again," he lashed out. "Francine warned me you'd try it. Well, I'm onto your scheme—yours and Sam Hollis's and the man who hires him to do his dirty work. I'll have them where I want them in a few hours. Then I'll crush the whole filthy machine, and you with it."

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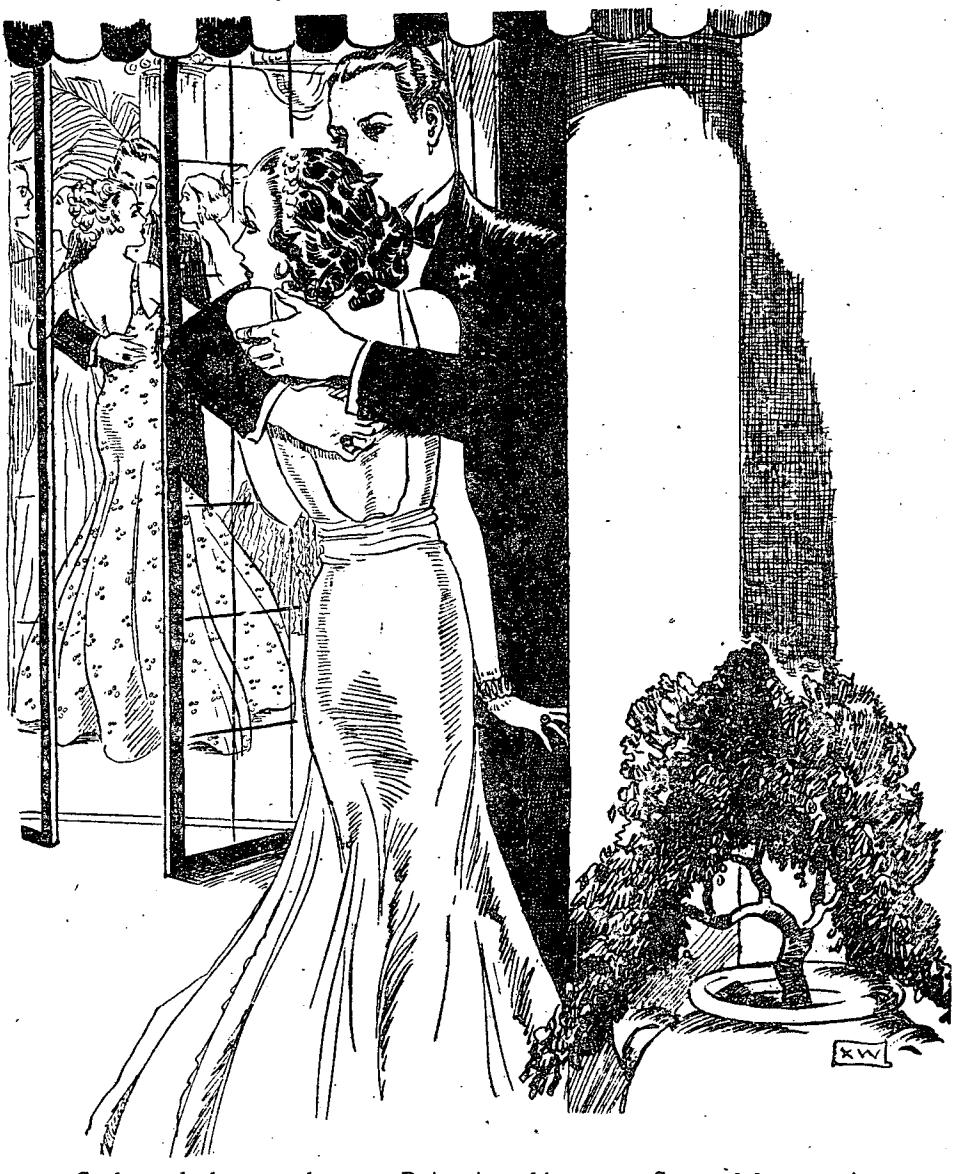

Carl reached out and swept Reine into his arms. Stunned by surprise, she went limp for a moment. And in that moment, she caught Bart's glance, filled with a hint of mockery. The next instant he was gone.

He was talking wildly, but his accusations didn't make sense in her consciousness. All she knew was that there was hate in his eyes.

She brushed limp fingers across her eyes. Suddenly her heart leaped. That wasn't hate she saw. It was pain, hunger, desire!

She swayed dizzily; his arm stiffened to give her support. She relaxed against him, and his arms tightened about her, crushing her close against him. The tumultuous throb of their hearts caused them to tremble.

He caressed the smooth dark

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beauty of her hair with a shaking hand, touched her cheek and the white loveliness of her bare shoulder reverently.

"Beautiful—beautiful," he murmured, his cheek resting against her tear-wet one. "Reine"—it was a far-away whisper of sound—"you're not teasing me? This isn't a trick?"

"Darling—darling! Oh, Bart, kiss me! I can't bear it if you don't!"

The kiss caught her up, lifted her into a world that held nothing but his arms, his lips and his strong, trembling body melting against her own.

Then a laughing, chattering group barged onto the porch with a suddenness that left Bart and Reine frozen in each other's embrace.

"Here they are!" Dodo Wilson shrieked to some one behind her.

Francine Adair thrust herself forward, hands akimbo. "You certainly did it, Reine." She tossed back over her shoulder to the others: "She said she'd make Bart fall in ten minutes, didn't she? And she did it in eight. You win, Reine! We'll pay up."

There was a stunned silence. The enormity of Francine's trickery left Reine speechless. Icy fingers of fear trailed over her flesh; icy fingers beat against her lips to liberate frozen speech. The moon, stars, and earth whirled crazily about her and through it, beating against her eardrums, rose wild laughter—Francine's.

Bart's look washed over her like a baptism of fire. He whirled and disappeared into the night. With his going, life flowed back into her limbs, lent wings to her feet. She raced after him, moaning, sobbing his name over and over until it became a litany of terror and heartbreak.

She caught up with him. Frantic hands clung to him, nor could he shake them off.

"Bart, you've got to listen. Francine lied! She lied, Bart!"

He strode on, almost carrying her weight as she clung to him. It was only when she stumbled and fell that he stopped. He lifted her easily, holding her at arm's length.

"Aren't you satisfied with what you've done to me?" he gritted through clenched teeth.

She struggled to get near to him. Suddenly he caught her close. His kisses weren't tender now. They burned and bruised her soft lips, sending waves of fear through her. She beat tiny fists against his shoulders, fighting to be free.

He shoved her away, fumbling in his pocket.

"You made me pay in humiliation for the kisses you gave me. Now I'll pay for the ones I stole."

He thrust something into her hand and walked quickly away. Dumbly, she stared at the thing in her hand. It was a new one-hundred-dollar bill. Bart had paid for those kisses. Paid her as though she were——

She screamed. It lanced the air like the eerie wail of some dying thing. The next instant she crumpled to the grass in a small, pathetic heap, beating the ground with bruised fists, sobbing brokenly.

Les found her. He picked her up, held her tenderly close while she gasped out in anguish. After the fierce paroxysm had passed, he suggested sensibly:

"Come back now, dear, and act as though nothing had happened."

"I can't—I can't!"

"You must. The others understand, and Francine has gone. Pamela saw to that the moment she heard. I'll tell Bart——"

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"No!" She beat his arm, shaking her head, the lovely hair tumbling about her face. "Promise me you won't tell him. I hate him! Oh, Les, I wish you didn't love me. Then I—I could marry you, and we'd——"

"Poor comfort in that thought for either of us, dear," he said unsteadily, while his mouth stretched in a grimace of pain.

They reached the porch. She shivered and drew back at the sound of music and laughter from within.

"Let me be alone for just a minute," she pleaded.

Like a small hurt ghost, she crept to the corner of the porch near the ramblers. The place where—could it be only moments ago?—Bart had held her in his arms.

"Reine!"

She jerked rigid and whirled. From the shadows, a dark figure emerged. It was Carl.

"Listen, Reine"—his voice was clipped, strained—"you're in a spot. Some of the girls are spreading a disgusting story, saying you've gone pretty far with Bart to save Sam. To save his pride, Bart will bolster it."

It was insane reasoning. But Reine wasn't capable of judging that, now. She was conscious only that the money Bart had thrust upon her burned her hand, that she must do something—anything—to prove to him that she had really intended to trick him. She wanted to wound him now, as he had wounded her.

"If we got married to-night, Reine, every one would think you didn't give a darn about him. It would hurt him, too. Don't you see that it would?"

It was a tempting argument. Almost before she knew it, she had given consent and they were speeding along the highway in Carl's shiny roadster, headed for the nearest justice of the peace.

Thoughts tumbled about in her brain—strange, queer thoughts that made no sense. Then, like the first low throb of a far-off drum, realization stirred through her. She was going to marry Carl! Suddenly she knew she couldn't go through with it.

"Carl, stop the car!" she cried.

It came to a skidding stop at the side of the road. He twisted about in his seat to face her, lips curved in a mocking smile.

"Changed your mind?"

"I can't do it, Carl. It wouldn't be fair to you."

He leaned back with folded arms. "You'll either consent to marry me, Reine, or we'll spend the night here. And what a reputation you'll have by to-morrow!"

"You can't mean that!"

"Try me and see. I told you I wouldn't be led around by the nose."

"But I don't love you, Carl."

His look was bold, sly, and filled with something that made her flesh crawl.

"Maybe I'll find I don't love you after a month or two. Then I'll be reasonable about a divorce."

"Bart will kill you for this!" she moaned, covering scarlet cheeks with cold hands.

She hadn't meant to say any such thing. Carl accepted it as a good joke and rocked with laughter. Her own clashed against it, harsh, discordant. What did it matter to Bart what Carl did, now or ever?

"After to-night," Carl gurgled between spells of laughter, "Bart will play ball with the big boys, or else he'll——"

Reine jerked very straight, hands clenched in her lap, quivering with an unknown dread. Intuition sent

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She raced after him, moaning, sobbing his name. She caught up with him. "Bart," she cried, "you've got to listen. Francine lied! She lied, Bart!"

her blindly forward in search of truth on the thin ice of Carl's careless statement.

"You mean they've picked to-night to frame Bart?" she asked, controlling the tremor in her voice.

"You know, then?" he demanded.

"Sam told me they were out to frame him," she lied in desperation.

"Yes, it's to-night. When Bart reaches his cabin, he'll find a reception committee waiting for him—

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cameras all around, and a lovely lady for his arms."

She remembered now Bart's accusation against an unknown man he had said Sam worked for. She took another blind step.

"Then you know that your father is the man Sam works for, Carl?"

He sobered instantly. "Who mentioned my father?"

"Oh, Carl! Don't look so surprised," she laughed. Another lie, she felt, wouldn't matter. "I knew it long ago."

"Why didn't you tell me you knew?"

She shrugged convincingly. "Sam didn't want me to."

He accepted the explanation and changed the subject.

"What about us? Don't go old-fashioned on me, darling."

"Well"—giving him a provocative sidelong glance—"you drive to the nearest justice, and I'll think it over."

"Good girl!" he enthused, reading consent into her reply.

They reached Medville. Carl drew the car up before a tiny, ivy-covered cottage set far back from the road in a grove of maple trees. The justice, cadaverous and half asleep, sensing a large fee, let them in. He smiled affably when Reine asked permission to comb her hair and powder her nose before the ceremony.

She followed his sleepy-eyed, wrinkled old wife up the stairs. Once inside the clean bedroom, she whirled and gripped the older woman's arm.

"Please, can I get out of here without the men seeing me? I'm in terrible trouble. Won't you help me?"

"There's the back stairs," the woman managed to gasp.

Reine pulled Bart's one-hundred-dollar bill from her bosom and thrust it into the gnarled old hand. Three minutes later she was in Carl's car, driving like mad toward Crest Cove.

It was a badly frightened, dishevelled Reine who pounded on the door of Bart's bungalow. The place was dark, the door locked, and no one answered her frantic summons.

A horrible thought left her weak and shaken, leaning against the door for support. Maybe Bart had resisted his enemies; maybe something had happened to him.

"Bart—Bart!"

A quick thud of running feet up the path whirled her about. Could it be Carl coming after her, to force her into marriage? She caught a glimpse of the figure in the moonlight and stumbled toward it with a glad cry.

Bart's arms were about her, holding her close.

"Dear, merciful Heaven!"—his breath jarred sobbingly through white lips. "You gave us an awful scare. Les and I have been hunting you for hours."

"Bart, you haven't been in the house?"

"No. I got nearly home, then turned and went back to Pamela's. I had to beg your forgiveness for the awful thing I had done. Les told me Francine had lied. I'm so ashamed, my darling."

Wild words tumbled from her lips as she repeated Carl's story. When she had finished, he said: "Don't you know this may mean prison for Sam?"

She clung to him, crying: "You're all that matters to me, Bart. I'll swear I was here with you all night. Sam won't let them hurt you, then. He can't without hurting me."

"Darling—darling! You'd sacrifice so much for me?"

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"I love you," she whispered simply and looked at him with steady, fearless eyes.

He threw back his head in a challenge to the world. "Nothing can hurt me now, sweetheart. And there's nothing for us to fear. I came up here to give my enemies a chance at me; I wanted to trap the man responsible for the political-graft racket. I knew he'd try to frame me as he framed Dave. But the girl they picked to do the trick this time was one of my own assistants. I matched their trickery and succeeded in placing her in their gang to get information. She got it. Plenty! That's what my campaign manager came to tell me to-day. We've enough evidence on Lathrop Trueman to put him behind bars for twenty years."

"And Sam?"

"The evidence proves him a blind dupe, not a crook. But he's definitely out of politics."

She relaxed against him, blissfully content. His arms tightened about her; his lips found her own waiting ones.

"We must find Les and tell him you're safe," he murmured, making no move to do anything of the kind.

"Darling," she breathed rapturously, lifting tempting lips again, "Les can wait until——"

His warm lips smothered the words. They forgot Les—forgot everything. Their heaven was only big enough for two.

LOVE

A CLOUD drifted by,
And as I watched, I
Whispered half aloud,
"Love is a cloud."

When, full of awe,
A new moon I saw,
I hummed a tune—
"Love is a new moon."

I heard a bird sing,
Just a simple thing,
But my heart it fed;
"Love's a song I said."

Love is a cloud, a
Moon; love is a song—
Come, let us find it now,
Come, come along!

ELFRIDA NORDEN.

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Violet Eyes

By Ethel Le Compte

MABRUE perched the hat—"Advance Models for Spring, Only Two Ninety-eight"—atop her shining brown hair. Squeezing in between two other bargain hunters, she peeped into the mirror.

The nice things the right hat can do for a girl! But dare she spend the money? She took off the hat and gazed at it covetously. In the bag she held between her slim body and her elbow was less than five dollars. On Saturday, she would get the ten dollars Aunt Bessie sent each week, but that would have to go for room rent and food.

Perhaps she had been reckless to buy this suit from Marge, but it did

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fit so well, was just the right shade of blue, and Marge had worn it only a few times. And where could you get a suit for five dollars?

She could not wear the outmoded black satin hat that had been Aunt Bessie's pride last winter and her own abomination this, with her new suit, and hope to get a job. She scowled at the atrocity lying there with her newspaper turned to the "Help Wanted—Female" page.

Her scowl changed to a look of astonishment as a man's hand reached between two shoppers and grabbed up the hat as if it were a prize. Actually, there was delight written all over the handsome face Mabrue saw over the women's heads.

Then he was in front of her, thrusting her own hat at her and saying crisply: "I'll take this. Put it in a bag and make it snappy, please." From his bill fold he took ten dollars and gave her that, too.

Marbue blinked. Then she grinned. He thought he was buying a new hat! What luck! Now she could buy the new one.

"Yes, sir," she said primly. She hurried away, only to turn and come back. Drawing him away from the mob, she confessed: "I'm not working here. The hat you want is my old one. I was trying on this blue one, you see, wondering if I could afford it." She gulped and held out his money. Tears stung her eyes.

"And I," exploded the young man, "have spent the morning searching for just this lid for Aunt Ellen to wear to a funeral." Suddenly, he brightened. "Say, Violet Eyes, how about a swap?" he demanded.

"Mister, you're an angel straight from the pearly gates!"

"You're the angel!" he returned. "You'll be an archangel if you'll meet me at the glove counter with the hat and change. I've got to buy a veil and black gloves, and get all the way down to Deal, New Jersey."

"I'll be only too glad to help you out," Mabrue answered promptly.

"Heck! I've lost the list with her glove size on it. Lemme look at your hands, young hoss trader. Yep, about the same size."

"Six will do, then. How do you know I'll show up with the change?"

"You're so all-fired honest you couldn't even let me buy the old hat without a scenario of the plot. Lady, Norman Norris trusts thee."

On the way to the glove counter, Mabrue went to the rest room to freshen her complexion and change hats. She smiled at her reflection.

As she approached the glove counter, she thought how tall and well-built, and how very well dressed Norman Norris was. He smiled at her as he would at his nearest and dearest, and spoke in a voice just as intimate.

"Auntie's veil and gloves," he said, as he dropped the small bags into the large one she gave him. "Here are the blue gloves you wanted, dear." To the clerk he said: "Not many wives trust their husbands to pick out their mittens, do they?"

"Perhaps madame would like to try them on," smiled the girl.

Once more this strange young man was making Mabrue blink. Her winsome face grew rosy. Then she laughed delightedly.

"Why not?" she said airily, favoring her "husband" with a mocking smile. "Did you get the rompers for Susie? And union suits for Danny?"

She perched on the stool, and

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rested her elbow on the little cushion, while the clerk eased on the exquisite blue glacé gloves.

"What size *does* Aunt Ellen wear?" Mabrue asked with a twinkle.

"Seven." Norman matched her twinkle. "Told you I'd lost the list, so how do I know about Susie's rompers and Danny's undies?"

"You lose everything, my problem child," sighed Mabrue.

"Well, who lost her wedding ring?" flung back Norman Norris. "I suppose to-day is as good as any to buy you a new one."

"No. Rings are so frightfully Victorian," Mabrue drawled.

"You were proud enough of yours," he murmured close to her ear, "when I put it on your digit last June—er—I mean several Junes ago, considering we have Susie and Danny. On the lost list, my pet, were shoes, sheers, and peach-colored do-dads for you. Remember?"

"Of all the zanies!" chuckled Mabrue.

"Hose for madame," put in the clerk, signaling to a clerk at the opposite counter.

Mabrue said hastily: "We'd best buy the children's things first."

Norman grinned wickedly. "Socks for mamma first," he decreed.

"Then I'll cure you, smarty," Mabrue told him, low.

But when she bought six pairs of the sheerest, he only laughed.

"Black for auntie, size ten," he ordered. "No cobwebs, however."

The hosiery went into the hat bag. "Ladies' shoes?" he inquired.

"I shall be pleased to escort you there, sir," spoke up an elegant young man. "I'm Smithers of ladies' shoes. Been matching hose for a customer." He smiled ingratiatingly at the handsome pair.

Mabrue clutched Norman's sleeve. "Are they all in conspiracy with you to push me from one department to another? Seriously, Mr. Norris, the joke has gone far enough already."

"I," said Norman, taking her arm and following their guide, "haven't had so much fun since the mice made a nest in aunty's best wig."

"I feel as if I were living in a comic strip," laughed Mabrue.

"I live *by* one, my lamb. I do the 'Let's Be Gay!' strip."

"Oh, I adore that series!" cried Mabrue.

"Could you adore its papa? Nice fellow. Sober. Reliable. Amusing, though slightly mad. He dotes on sleek brown hair with red glints in it, violet eyes with imps in 'em, devastating dimples, and luscious lips."

"Why, there's my uncle!" Mabrue was away like a shot.

Norman was after her like another and more speedy shot. When she admitted it was a ruse to get away, he grew grave. He asked soberly: "You want to get away? End this? And it was off to such a good start!"

They returned to the guide, and Norman explained: "Thought we saw Uncle Eben, but it was two other people. Lead on, Mr. Smithers."

"We can save time if you don't mind climbing a short stairway, sir."

"We spent our honeymoon climbing the Alps," Norman assured him.

At the turn in the stairs, he drew Mabrue to him. "I was so happy over finding such a delightful playmate," he chided. "Why did you scram?"

"Because I can't let you see the darns in my stockings," Mabrue confessed, close to tears. "This foolery has been the only fun I've

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had since I came to the city. It was worse back home."

"Why, you poor, sweet bunny!" His free arm went around her, and his concerned eyes looked into hers. "Dewy violets," he breathed, and kissed her soft, tremulous mouth with infinite tenderness.

For a second, Mabrue clung to him, then freed herself.

"You will play with Norman, sweet Vi Eye?" he pleaded softly.

"But the d-darns," she wailed.

"I love 'em because you did 'em with your own fair hands."

When Mr. Smithers slipped off Mabrue's scuffed brown oxford, and the darns were revealed in all their neatness, Mabrue flushed rosily.

While the salesman was seeking the blue kid pumps and brown oxfords asked for, Norman said: "I crave to see those enchanting ankles in sheers."

"How you do run on, Mr. Norris," laughed Mabrue, her color deepening.

"Does my running get me to the goal I hope for?" he demanded.

"Does it usually? You must have had plenty of experience."

"I have, but I've never been so darn keen about a girl before," he told her with earnestness in his gay voice and eyes.

Mabrue had nothing to say to that. She wanted terribly to believe him, but it was all so impossible.

After Mr. Smithers had fitted her, she whispered to Norman: "Just the oxfords. The blues are adorable, but not practical."

"We'll take both," Norman said crisply. "Now for lunch."

"I'm in your debt too much already," Mabrue demurred.

"I'm in yours, you mean. Because of your hat, Aunt Ellen will probably leave me an extra million."

"Is there really an Aunt Ellen?"

"Two hundred pounds of her. Nearly sixty, a tartar, but I love her. We live together in an old-fashioned apartment in the Murray Hill section, but she spends a lot of her time visiting old friends in the hinterland. She's been with a sick friend in Deal. The friend died yesterday, hence the shopping. I've got to drive down there to-day with the stuff."

"I thought you were buying the hat for a joke or something. It's a hand-me-down from *my* aunt. We've both cherished it, but it does need a new lining. I'll buy one. You wanted to see the sheers on, so I'll go to the rest room and put them and the new pumps on, and meet you at the restaurant on the eighth floor. Order something light for me."

"Is it Emily Post to lunch with a lady whose name you do not know?"

"Mabrue Milburn accepts Mr. Norris's kind invitation to luncheon."

"Mabrue Milburn isn't taking a run-out powder, is she?"

When Mabrue, fairly dancing in the new pumps, entered the restaurant, she saw Norman's sleek black head at once. She thrilled at the obvious relief on his face.

"We should have gone where there was dancing," he said, seating her.

"You've got to drive to Deal," she reminded him.

"Worse luck—but I mustn't say that when I've just had the luck to meet you, the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. There will be other days—heady spring days and glorious summer nights, too."

Mabrue's heart was beating with a new wild beat. Her lovely face

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was radiant. She fairly sparkled. She looked and felt another girl from the one Norman had mistaken for a clerk.

"Meeting *you* has been the nicest thing in *my* life," she said.

Eying the mixed grill being placed before them, she asked: "Do you call this light?"

"Nope. Just sensible. Go to it, kid. I'm starved, myself."

Presently, Mabrue was telling him of her life in the up-State town, of Aunt Bessie's kindness to her orphaned niece. "She let me come to New York to look for a job," she went on, "and she's been sending me money, when she can't afford it. I'd about given up trying to find work, when Marge—she rooms next

"I've never been so darn keen about a girl before," he told her with earnestness in his voice and eyes. Mabrue wanted terribly to believe him, but it was all so impossible.

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to me—told me it was my clothes. She sold me this suit yesterday, and told me to buy a hat."

After luncheon, they bought the lining for the hat, but the trimmer wouldn't sew it in because the hat hadn't been bought there.

"There are needle and thread at home," Norman said tentatively.

"Then you can sew it in," Mabrue told him with an impish grin.

"And lose my amateur standing. Let's go buy the peach do-dads."

"I veto further splurging, dear ex-husband."

"Whadda ya mean 'ex'? The word is 'future' husband."

When they climbed into Norman's car, they had the peach "do-dads."

During the short drive, Mabrue was telling herself that, Aunt Bessie to the contrary, it was all right to accept these things from a young man for whom you had done an inestimable favor. It was all right to go to his apartment when he was as nice as Norman, to do him another favor.

It was a walk-up brownstone, quietly elegant. The vestibule boasted brass letter boxes complete with speaking tubes and push buttons. The floors were black-and-white marble. The stair carpet, turkey-red.

"I'd like to slide down the banisters," laughed Mabrue.

A second later all their purchases were on the stairs, and she was flying downward on the shining rail. She hit the newel post hard.

"Saves me spanking you," grinned Norman.

"I do not intend to do anything to warrant a spanking, sir."

"Oh, no?" Norman's straight black brows shot up comically.

The telephone was ringing as they entered the apartment.

"Look around while I answer it," Norman suggested.

Mabrue wandered from the spacious drawing-room with its massive furniture, rich silk hangings, and deep-piled carpet, into a small room. She caught her breath at the sheer beauty that met her eyes. Cabinets filled with exquisite Chinese porcelains lined three of the walls.

When Norman joined her, she said: "I didn't know there was anything so exquisitely beautiful in all the world."

"Exquisitely beautiful, yes, but dashed valuable and by way of being a nuisance. The apartment is never left alone nights because of this stuff. Aunt Ellen gathered it when she lived in the Orient. That was the old girl on the wire. I've got to stay in Deal for the funeral. Norah, our cook, is ill at her daughter's. Belle, the day cleaner, won't stay here nights alone. I'll have to phone some of my friends and see if I can get any of them to stay."

"I'll sew the lining in while you do it," offered Mabrue. "You know, I could look at that lovely china forever."

"That's all it's good for—to be gazed at. Too easily broken to be used or even touched. Like friendship when you ask a favor."

"Or hearts."

"Hearts don't break. I ought to know," he said savagely, but did not explain. He led her into a bed-sitting room, with ivory-colored walls and furniture, gay chintzes and rugs. Through the sunny window, Mabrue saw with surprise a small, square lawn, hedged in, and a little maple tree.

"The only young room we boast," Norman commented. "Aunt Ellen fixed it up for her grandniece, Faith, but the poor kid was so scared of

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the old tartar, she scrammed. Here's the sewing box."

When he returned, the hat looked almost new and quite perky. Mabrue pulled it over her ears and made a face. "Why the gloom?" she asked.

Norman laughed. "I thought all the ad putter-inners must be blind; but, if you wore that lid, no wonder you didn't get a job."

"Oh, I had this tissue paper inside to pad it."

"Good. It's sure to fit over auntie's wig. The gloom is because I can't get any one to stay here for several days and nights. Just what I expected. As I said, friendships are easily broken when you ask a favor. I don't know what to do—— Say, Mabrue, could you stay?"

"I could, but—well, how do you know I'm to be trusted?"

"I've proved that you are, Miss Hoss Trader. Look, there's a radio, scads of books, magazines, and even a new toothbrush." He pulled out a dresser drawer. "Nighties and everything for auntie's guests, or you. You can phone the stores for food and charge it. How about it, Vi Eye?"

"How long do you want me to stay?"

"Until Monday—no, forever!" He caught her hands in his and drew her to him. "Mabrue, you lovely witch, what have you done to me? I do want you here forever, close to my heart."

She felt his lips on her shining hair, his breath warm on her forehead. Straining back, she searched his eyes. What she saw there sent quivers of ecstasy from her heart to her smiling lips.

"Are we dreaming this, Norman?" she asked.

It was his kiss on her lips that told her she was not dreaming.

That kiss, fiercely tender, passionately demanding, awakened her to the full meaning of life.

"I love you, love you," he was saying as he rained kisses on her face and soft white throat. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the armchair near the window. "I hate to leave you, sweetest," he lamented. "I shall think of you sleeping in that little bed and dreaming of me. Each day, look out this window and watch the tiny leaves of the maple opening under the warm kiss of the sun, just as your dear heart opened when I kissed your sweet lips."

Presently, there was a good-by kiss—a whole series of good-by kisses—then Mabrue was alone with her rapture and her bewilderment. Things just did not happen like this in real life. She would wake up and find herself in that ugly room uptown.

She spent the greater part of her time admiring the exquisite loveliness of the china, behind glass where no rude hand could break it. Because of that rare collection she was here.

She recalled Norman's savagely bitter denial that hearts break. Why had he said that he ought to know?—she wondered.

Saturday afternoon she found out the answer.

Belle had cleaned the already immaculate place, and had left with a friendly smile to this new "grandniece of Miss Ellen's," when the bell rang. Thinking it was the superintendent, whom Norman had instructed to call several times a day, to see if all were well, Mabrue opened the door.

Past her, through the foyer and into the drawing-room, swept a tall, beautiful young woman in smart, expensive clothes.

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"The taxi driver is bringing up my baggage," she called out.

"But who are you?" Mabrue demanded, rushing after her.

The intruder turned and stared haughtily. "I am Mrs. Norman Norris. To think of Aunt Ellen actually getting a new maid! Did Norah die, or—— Say, you're not a maid. Another grandniece or—one of Norman's friends?"

Mabrue, fighting off recurring faintness, was unable to answer. She sank into a chair, feeling as if the whole world was rocking on its foundations.

"So my last guess was right!" flared the other girl, her face a mask of fury. "The old dragon must be away, or he wouldn't dare. High time I came back from Florida! You little pirate, I've a mind to tear your eyes out and——" She checked herself as the taxi man appeared with her baggage. "This way, please." She led him to Norman's room.

Mabrue bolted for the kitchen. She held the ammonia bottle under her nose, gulped down cold water. "Oh, it can't be true," she wailed aloud, burying her face in a dish towel.

"Oh, it can't, eh?" The girl who claimed to be Norman's wife burst into the room. "If you don't believe me, call the superintendent. Norman always was unfaithful to me, but this is the most audacious thing he ever did. Wait until I tell Aunt Ellen——"

"You'll have to prove to me that you are Mrs. Norris," Mabrue cut in, white as death, but suddenly mistress of herself.

"Look inside this ring then!" said the other coldly.

Mabrue took the wedding ring she pulled off. Engraved inside it was:

From N. N. to D. S. 6-6-30

Mabrue laid the ring back on the table.

"If that isn't enough, look at this," the girl said, taking up the ring and throwing down a small snapshot taken from her bag.

Mabrue bent to look at the picture. There was no mistaking that it was of Norman and this girl. Furthermore, there was the signature she had often seen on the "Let's Be Gay!" cartoons:

NORMAN RIS

and underneath it:

and my wife, Diane, 6-10-30.

It was Sunday evening. For twenty-four hours, Mabrue had lain on her bed in the ugly room she had thought never to use again. There had been a few blessed hours when she had slept. Awake, she had been on the rack of torturing thoughts.

Things had blurred since she had looked at the smiling pictured faces that had proved that Norman had lied to her and deceived her. The stab that had killed her faith in him had done something terrible to her. She had heard Diane Norris say: "If you weren't such a sweet, innocent-looking little thing, I'd have had the police here instead of bothering with proofs. Clear out, before I change my mind."

The only thing Mabrue took out of all Norman had bought was a pair of stockings. She had put her darned ones on the dumb-waiter with the rubbish. She had hesitated about the hat, but had left it, and departed bare-headed.

Thinking of the hat which had started it all, she wept anew.

"Awake, Mabrue?" asked a girl's anxious voice from the doorway.

"Please leave me alone, Marge," Mabrue sobbed.

Marge came in and shut the door.

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Mrs. Norris stared at Mabrue haughtily. "So my guess was right! You're one of Norman's friends. You little pirate, I've a mind to tear your eyes out."

"I risked her smelling the toast," she said cheerfully, "so you'll have to eat it and drink the tea."

She came over to the bed and switched on the light.

Mabrue sat up and blinked. "You're sweet, Marge," she said. She drank the hot tea thirstily, and nibbled at the toast.

"Won't you tell me all about it, honey?" coaxed the visitor. Then, harshly: "There are laws in this land, you know. If some guy——"

"Marge, I've told you all there

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is to tell. It's not what you think." She gave back the plate and cup. "May I have your newspaper to look for a job, please?"

"I'll get it; but, honestly, honey, you've got me scared."

While Mabrue looked through the want ads, Marge read.

Suddenly, Marge giggled. "Well, if this dame isn't wearing the twin to your hand-me-down lid, I'll eat the paper!" she cried out.

It was the name that Mabrue saw first—Norman Norris! Then his picture. He was with a handsome elderly woman who was wearing the old hat she had given him. Mabrue, with a little cry, seized the news sheet.

Her heart pounding madly, she read the account of the funeral of a wealthy Jerseyite, which Norman Norris, famous cartoonist, and Miss Ellen Bradburst Norris, daughter of the late Senator Wade Norris, had attended.

Monday evening found Mabrue and Marge in the latter's room. They had just eaten a sketchy meal cooked over the forbidden electric grill.

"Monday in the housewares is no picnic," yawned Marge, "but I bet you feel worse than I after tramping all day and not finding a job. You should have bought a smart hat as I told you," she chided, never guessing how she was hurting Mabrue. "My béret looks cute on you, but it's not the right lid to go job hunting in. That reminds me. The dame with the twin of your hand-me-down is hogging the headlines. In again to-night."

Mabrue turned cold with terror. "He—she isn't—hurt or anything?"

"Robbed. Take the paper along with you. I'm going to lie down."

Mabrue hurried to her own room with the newspaper.

Under the picture which had appeared the day before was the headline:

NEW RACKET—PRICELESS CHINA STOLEN; RANSOM DEMANDED.

When Miss Norris and her nephew, Norman Norris, creator of the popular syndicated cartoon "Let's Be Gay!", returned to their Murray Hill apartment this morning, they discovered that the choicest pieces of Miss Norris's famous collection of Oriental china had been stolen.

The thief had left a note which read: "You can have your stuff back for five thousand dollars. I shall phone instructions Monday."

A girl named Mary Brown, hired by Mr. Norris to guard the china, is being sought in——

Mabrue read no more.

Her mind in chaos, she slipped downstairs to the telephone in the hallway. She found Norman's number in the directory and dialed it. Her heart was thumping so it shook her body. He had said "Hello" three times before she could answer. She said:

"Norman? This is Mabrue. I didn't take the china, nor——"

"Mabrue!" his voice shouted. "I know you didn't. Say, they didn't kidnap you, too, did they?" he cried in alarm.

"No. They may have kidnaped —your wife."

"Diane! How did you know about her?" he asked harshly.

Mabrue replaced the receiver and stumbled blindly upstairs.

In her room, she collapsed on the bed.

Norman had lied to her, deceived her! His own words had confirmed that. Sobs shook her, great, tearing sobs, but her eyes were dry.

She became aware of loud voices, heavy footsteps, then a pounding on her door, and a demand that she

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open in the name of the law. The door swung open, and two policemen came into the room.

"Your landlady says you just used the phone," said one. "What number did you call, miss?"

Mabrue simply stood and stared.

"You called Mr. Norris and you didn't know all calls to him were being traced, did you? Better come clean."

Mabrue was fighting off faintness when Marge pushed aside the two men and rushed to her. Mabrue stopped fighting.

Marge was giving her water when she struggled back to consciousness.

"You two, scaring the poor kid," raged Marge. "What's——"

"Sorry, but she's gotta come along with us."

Mabrue went. So did Marge. In the station house Mabrue clung to Marge, shaken with terror, as she faced the officer in charge.

Suddenly, terror left her. She drew herself up and looked at the man behind the desk. In a low, steady voice she said: "I have done nothing wrong. Why should I be afraid? What do you want with me?"

"You'll know all about that when Mr. Norris gets here," she was told.

"He—is coming here? Oh, I can't stay! Let me go!"

"Afraid you'll have to stay, miss," said the sergeant kindly.

"I—oh, here he comes." She clung to Marge, quivering and shaken.

"The young woman who phoned you is here, Mr. Norris," some one said.

Then he was standing before her, his face white and haggard, his hands reaching out, taking hers. "Why, Mabrue," he said, with a laugh obviously forced. "I am sorry this happened." He turned from her bewilderment to the sergeant and said: "This young lady is my fiancée, officer. I—er—well, I thought she was out of town and did not expect her to phone. Of course, you didn't know this, and, with your orders to trace every call, you did only your duty. May I take her away now, sir?"

"Why, of course, Mr. Norris," the sergeant said readily.

Norman thanked him. He said softly to Mabrue: "I'll explain outside."

"I'm Marge, her best friend," put in a voice, "I'm tagging along to see that she gets a square deal. She's been crying her eyes out since Saturday, and I'm after the guilty one."

"I'm the guilty one, Marge," Norman confessed gravely. "But——"

"They've got a young woman at the Thirtieth Street station house, Mr. Norris," interrupted the sergeant. "This is the right one. She talked ransom to Miss Norris, all right. I'll give you escort down there."

Outside, Mabrue drew away from Norman, but he held her and said: "Diane didn't tell you that I was able to have our marriage annulled a month after it took place, did she? Well, I did. Mabrue, how could you doubt me? Darling, I love you. Will you marry me?"

"Norman!" She raised a radiant face for his kiss.

Norman's car followed the squad car as it raced downtown.

"Don't mind me," said Marge. "I'm the perfect chaperon—blind, deaf, and dumb."

"Also the perfect friend," added Norman. "I'll never forget that."

"O. K.," said Marge, "but I'll call it square if you find out whether that red-headed cop who's leading us is married or not, and if not, fix

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"Why, Mabrue!" Norman said when he arrived at the station house. He turned to the sergeant: "This young lady is my fiancée, officer. Of course, you did only your duty, but you've made a mistake."

it so's he drives me home alone."

"Agreed!" laughed Norman. He tucked Mabrue's hand under his elbow. "Even that helps," he said softly. "Gosh, Vi Eye, when I got home and you weren't there, I nearly went crazy. I'd told Aunt Ellen everything, and had sold her on the idea of a new niece, chiefly because of the hat and——"

"Then it was Mabrue's hat!" put in Marge, chortling.

"Some day, we'll tell you the whole story," offered Mabrue.

"And you left everything, even the new hat," chided Norman. "I

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knew you hadn't stolen the stuff, and I was afraid to let myself think you'd been kidnaped." His arm crushed her hand. "The thought of any one hurting you——"

"Some one did," Mabrue interposed. "That girl Diane. She had your ring and a picture of you both with your signature on it."

"Egad, why did she show up after all these years? How did she know we were away? Do you suppose it was she who took the stuff?"

It was Diane they had at the Thirtieth Street station. Once more Mabrue faced her, but this time Norman was at her side. Even so, Mabrue turned away from the unmasked hatred in the other girl's eyes.

"You stole the stuff?" Norman asked incredulously.

It was the desk sergeant who answered: "She did, Mr. Norris. We found it all at her apartment, after she had spoken to your aunt. She had implicated the superintendent of your apartment house. They seem to be friends, and he tipped her off that there was only a young lady in your apartment and she must be very important to you, seeing the way he was ordered to look out for her."

"This is the young lady, sergeant. Miss Milburn and I are engaged."

Diane spoke for the first time. In a voice that dripped venom, she said: "I pity you, youngster, and I hope he gives you a better deal than he gave me, the snob."

"I had no intention of broadcasting the facts of our unhappy union," Norman said sharply, "but you've asked for it by that remark. I was able to have our marriage annulled because it was proved that you had gone through the wedding ceremony several times before you met me, without bothering about divorces. Also, you had served time for blackmail."

Mabrue didn't look at the other girl as the officer silenced the angry tirade that followed Norman's denunciation of her.

"Norman asked: "May Miss Milburn and I go, sergeant?"

"Miss Milburn may. You've got to stay and make the charge."

Mabrue joined Marge, waiting in another room. Marge had evidently not waited for Norman to find out

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about the marital status of the red-headed cop, for they were laughing together like old friends.

"Mr. Casey is seeing me home, Mabrue," she said. "Shall I wait until Mr. Norris is finished?"

"No; run along. Telephone me at his apartment." She grew rosy. "I'll need a bridesmaid very soon, Marge."

Presently Mabrue and Norman were driving through the busy streets to the quieter Murray Hill section. Outside the door, he took her in his arms. "You do love me?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, but I can't seem to think that——"

"When one is in love one doesn't think, sweetest. One only feels. Tell me what you feel, darling one."

She whispered tenderly:

"I feel that all the love I am capable of is going out to you."

"My own sweetheart," he murmured. He laid his lips on hers in a kiss that sent the blood racing hotly through her. She clung to him in the dimness, every fiber of her being vibrant, throbbing, as she gave him back kiss for kiss.

"To-morrow," he said huskily, "will be our wedding day. Let's go tell Aunt Ellen that all's well. You must not be afraid of her, sweetheart. She's really a kindly soul."

"I fear nothing when you are with me, to-morrow's husband," she murmured.

As he carried her upstairs, he asked: "Want to slide down again? Or shall I spank you?"

She laughed and nestled closer in his embrace.

After Norman had told Aunt Ellen that it was Diane who had stolen the china, which, he assured her, was quite safe and would be returned, he brought Mabrue to her. It took the elderly lady a full three minutes to inspect the younger one. Then she exclaimed, "You'll do, child!" and kissed Mabrue heartily.

Presently, she resumed her doze, only to start awake and glance at the lovers on the divan, talking earnestly. "Where does your aunt buy her hats, Mabrue?" she demanded. But Mabrue and Norman were lost to everything save their own happy plans, so, with a resigned shrug, Aunt Ellen turned away.

¶ "Anything might happen to the maid of honor!" said Avis Kent to herself as she sped along the deserted mountain road where danger seemed to lurk at every turn. She was on her way to be the only attendant at her best friend's wedding, and she said the words blithely, carelessly, little knowing what adventure lay in store for her.

Follow her gripping experiences to a dramatic climax in

"Captive Wife,"

a new story

By PEGGY RUTHERFORD

appearing in next week's issue of this magazine.

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Primitive Love

A SERIAL—Part III.

By Cordelia Snow

CHAPTER VIII.

A SICKENING sensation swept Bobbie. Hulda and Red, arm in arm, were entering the store, hesitating a minute at the door, with the rays of the setting sun a shaft of gold before them.

Hulda's braids caught its gleam and shone, yellow as wheat at harvest time, against Red's towering shoulder; he was saying something to her, smiling down at her, his white teeth shining.

They took a table not three feet from Bobbie. Her back was toward

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them, but she watched in a little mirror that faced her on the wall, as they settled themselves and as Red gave their order. By reaching over her shoulder and back a little, she could have touched Red's arm, but Hulda was hidden behind his broad-shouldered form. It was Hulda's low, sweetly heavy voice, however, that held Bobbie frozen.

"I won't be able to see you again," she was saying. "I don't dare, Red. Coming in here like this is crazy. Bill is terribly jealous. He's blaming me for everything. He swears I'm double-crossing him, and if he ever finds out that I'm meeting you like this, he'll do something dreadful to both of us!"

Bobbie gasped.

Then Red's low rumble sounded, comforting, cautioning, soothing, and his brown hand covered the girl's strong white one. Her eyes glued on the mirror before her, Bobbie watched his bent head. In a turmoil of bitter rebellion, she thought:

"What has she to give Red that I couldn't? Why must he go to a girl like that for love?"

It seemed an eternity to Bobbie, waiting there in the soft dusk, before they moved. But when they had gone out to the street at last, and following, she had stood for an instant in the shadow of the awning, watching them go their different ways, she had seen what they hadn't: Some one else watching, too—Bill Nolan. She knew by the great black anger of his lowering face, that he had seen what she had, and her heart was a twist of fear and shame—fear for Red's safety, and shame that she could fear.

It was long after sundown when she reached home. The cottage was unlit, deserted. Even her father was gone from his chair on the porch.

Leaning against the rail, she stared down into the valley below.

With a strange, tired listlessness, she thought: "I suppose I ought to warn Red about Nolan, but I can't. And anyway, he couldn't do anything to-night. He's probably down on the bridge now, and he'll be there till he goes off duty to-morrow morning. I could go down and tell Tim, but I'd probably run into Pitt and Honey making love to each other, somewhere, in the moonlight."

Her lip curled. Love! What was it anyway—this thing they called love—this thing that could tear one's heart into little pieces?

When she could stand the loneliness and silence no longer, she went down to the office. "Where's everybody?" she asked, and a draftsman, bending over a blue print, looked up at her from visor-shaded eyes.

"Chief's gone to the city," he told her. "A wire came late this afternoon. Carson drove him to the train. Said to tell you he'd be back day after to-morrow, sure. Miss Ashton was round here a little while ago, but she's disappeared. Isn't she up at the cottage?"

"Honey?" There was a startled catch in Bobbie's throat. "Didn't she drive in with them?" Then, prompted by a fear she wouldn't acknowledge even to herself, she added:

"Where's Tim? Do you know where I can find him?"

The man laughed. "Say! You'd better stay away from that old boy! He's on a rampage. There's dynamite missing from the storehouse, and he's got blood in his eye!"

But his last words were lost on an empty doorway, on the swish of

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a swiftly vanishing figure, and the cry of a hoot owl, from a withered stump that once had been a tree.

Bobbie found Tim down where the forms for the last almost-completed arch rose, ghostly against a star-dotted sky.

"Tim!" she gasped. "Is it true? Is there dynamite missing from the storehouse? They told me at the office. Is it true?"

"True?" A firefly split the dusk. Tim slapped at it angrily. "Ain't you been raised round camps like this, gal? Don't you know we check every stick of dynamite that's used—every cap and inch of fuse? Sure it's missing! And believe me, I've got ten men pacing this bridge to-night. I'm going to keep them pacing it every night from now on, until we're through. One try at blowing us up is enough. There ain't going to be another—not while your dad's gone, anyway."

Bobbie grabbed his arm and shook it. Her voice was shrill with terror.

"Oh, Tim, you fool!" she cried. "It's not your bridge that's going to be blown up to-night! Don't you see? It's Honey! She's stolen your dynamite. She's going to do that fool thing you told her to do, the other night up at the cottage. She's going to blow a hole in Bear Creek and flood Red out! Where is she? Have you seen her anywhere? Think, Tim! Think!"

"No, I ain't seen her. What's the matter? Heat got you?" Tim was irritated. "Why, that kid couldn't blow a hole in a tin can! She's scared to touch the stuff. Squealed like a mouse if I poked it at her. Get out now and leave me alone. Swear if I blame Red for spanking you. I'd do it myself, goldarn it, if you was a year or so younger."

He yanked his arm loose and made his way into the maze of giant footings. His lantern, swinging carefully ahead of him, sent tiny light beams among the towering timbers—beams that grew fainter and fainter, to lose themselves at last in the shadowy gloom.

As Bobbie watched him disappear, utter despair swept her. No one would believe her—Tim, her father, laughing, thinking her crazy! But she knew. She knew what love could do to a girl, to what heights or what depths it could drag her.

Honey had stolen that dynamite! Bobbie was as certain of it as though her own eyes had witnessed the theft. For days Honey had been brooding over what Tim, in his blind fooling, had suggested—been planning for it. And she had taken this opportunity when she was left alone, to go over to Red's camp and blow that hole in the bank of Bear Creek.

What motive but that could have kept Honey hanging around Tim's heels that hot morning, learning how to set a blast, watching how dynamite was laid?

Oh, what an idiot she had been! What a blind, self-centered idiot—so wrapped up in her own troubles, she couldn't see what lay right before her eyes!

That white-iron look in Honey's face should have told her, if nothing else had. She remembered those eager questions Honey had thrown at her father and Tim: "If—if some one let the water down on Red's camp, would that mean you'd win the bonus? Would that mean you'd win the hundred thousand dollars?"

And above all else, the love in her eyes when they had rested on Pitt! That awful, avid hunger of love!

And before Bobbie knew what she

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was going to do, before she could reason or plan, her feet were carrying her up the river path which led to Red's camp. She was running as she never before had run in all her motherless, tomboy life—like a wild thing, through the weedy, knee-high grass.

Honey knew that path. Red had taken them all over it to show them the dam. They had stopped at the bank of the diverted river overlooking the camp, while Red explained how, once the dam was finished, it was to be swung back into its old channel once more.

That's where Honey would head for—that place above the camp. Something inside Bobbie told her so. It seemed to Bobbie that she could see Honey running too, terror-stricken, lugging her awful burden. Poor, foolish, love-crazed Honey!

There were clouds in the sky—smoke clouds from those far-away fires—that covered the moon. Through them the stars peeped fitfully, as though they, too, were afraid, and the night breathed itself into the croak of the frogs and the cricket's never-ending chirp.

Stumbling over briers, stones and weeds, Bobbie had reached the rise of ground that led up to the newly made river bank, when she came on Honey, at last.

She was lying face down in the dirt. The twist of dynamite sticks was beside her. A tangled line of fuse, soaked with dew, trailed like a white worm in the weeds. Her pretty white dress was a torn rag about her. She was crying, her shoulders shaking with the sobs that became words, to lose themselves with the medley of night sounds that filled the air.

She heard Bobbie, and sitting up, turned to her a swollen face, that was beyond fear:

"I can't do it! I can't! I thought I could blow up the old creek, and —and I can't! I don't know how to set it off! And I'm so scared!"

She struck a match, and in its light, Bobbie saw that the ground was a litter of matches all about her. She made an effort to set the fuse to burning. It sizzled, sputtered, and Bobbie ground it out beneath her boot. Snatching at Honey's shoulders, she yanked her upright, and shook her until reason came back into her blankly staring eyes.

But with reason, there came to Honey something else—terror. It was a terror that swept her as the flood she had been trying so vainly to release, would have swept Red and his sleeping camp below.

Watching her, Bobbie saw her try to scream. There was something unspeakably dreadful about the scream that died against dry, parched lips—something horrible about the white-rimmed, wide-opened eyes, and the white, outflung hands that shielded her as she backed away down the path into the meadow below.

Bobbie watched her as she ran, her white dress billowing about her, like a straying moonbeam lost in the smother of the night.

Standing where Honey had left her, Bobbie poked gingerly at the smudging fuse, touched with the tips of her boots the dynamite sticks in their yellow wrappings. Dull anger gripped her.

"I'll have to gather this stuff all up and sneak it back into Tim's storehouse," she told herself. "I'll have to shield Honey as I've shielded Red. I'll have to go on lying, pretending—— Oh, I'm sick of it. I'm sick of everything!"

She was still standing there, the dynamite sticks under one arm, a

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length of white fuse trailing forlornly from a listless hand, when Red found her.

Coming up from the camp below, his footsteps softened by the matted grass, he was standing almost beside her before she heard him. It was that strange, sweet haunting of his nearness, that brought her swinging breathlessly toward him. For he said nothing at all.

He simply stared down at her with eyes too sad for anger.

Suddenly Bobbie came upon Honey. She was lying face down in the dirt and crying, her shoulders shaking with sobs. "I can't do it! I thought I could blow up the old creek, but I don't know how to set it off!"

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A seed pod from a locust tree dropped with a dry rattle to the ground at Bobbie's feet. The lights from the sprawling camp below made a crazy-quilt pattern against the night. Her heart, pounding high in her throat, choked her.

Wearily, Red leaned over, his tall body bending awkwardly from the hips. Wearily, he gathered up the length of trailing fuse and tore it loose from its cap.

"For a girl who's been raised in a construction camp," he said, "that's a pretty bum job, Bobbie. Thought I'd taught you how to handle powder better than that. And besides" —his eyes swept the bank, and turned with careful judging to the black-shadowed valley with its glimmering lights—"you're not far enough up the slope to do much good. It's a shame, but I guess there isn't anything for you to do but to take your stuff, and trot back home."

And Bobbie answered him, too tired to fight, too hopeless to try an explanation: "Yes, I guess there isn't, Red," and stumbling a little, her feet found the river path.

She slept that night, in her father's room. Through the crude partition, she could hear Honey's sobs.

"She can't be any more miserable than I am," Bobbie thought dully, and turned her face to the wall, grateful for the utter and overwhelming weariness, that, like a sedative, brought her blessed forgetting.

The light was streaking through her window when she awakened at last to a strangely familiar voice—Sandy McMaster's. Its high-pitched, thin tones cut through the walls to her ears:

"All right, Pitt Carson, if Bob Brent ain't here, he ain't. But where's that tomboy kid of his? Get her out here where I can talk to her.

"Red's gone, I tell you! He's been kidnaped—maybe murdered! If she knows anything about it, I'm going to find out. Anything that's ever happened to Red to hurt him, came through her!

"She was hanging round our camp last night. I saw Red and her talking together up on the bluff, and when he come back down something ailed him. He got in his car and drove off toward town, and never came home. The car's standing empty up at the top of the hill. There's blood marks in it, and a piece of his shirt, all torn and bloody caught on the fender.

"Don't think I haven't heard what you've been saying over here—spreading stories that we're double-crossing you, Red and me. Lies! Dirty lies! If it hadn't been for Red holding me back, I'd been over here long ago and cleaned up on the pack of you! But if you've done anything to Red! If you've dared to——"

Bobbie's feet struck the floor with a bang. She thrust her arms into an old bath robe of her father's. It trailed the floor, sweeping fantastically about her.

It had been four years and more since she had heard Sandy McMaster's voice, but listening, the room seemed to fade away, the years forgotten, and she was standing, a child-wife with her boy-husband beside her, shivering before this same thin pipe of anger. Unconsciously, she looked down at her hand, expecting Red's fingers to be clasping it protectingly.

And suddenly, all her hatred and suspicion were gone. All the shame that these awful last days had

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added to four years of heartbreak and hunger were swept away in one wild panic of terror.

What was this awful thing Sandy was saying about Red's being kidnaped—about his empty, blood-stained car?

A small, white-faced figure with huge gray eyes beneath tousled brown hair, an oddly pathetic figure, lost in the great bath robe that enveloped her, Bobbie threw herself from her room.

"Uncle Sandy!" she cried, snatching at his arm, and her eyes through their unbelievable lashes were white-rimmed with the fear that widened them. "Oh, Uncle Sandy! I do know what's happened to Red! I do! It's Bill Nolan! He's jealous of Red and a girl up at the junction! He—he saw Red with her yesterday. Oh, I should have warned him! I did see Red last night, but I—I—there were other things and then——"

The old man looked at her. "Other things?" he grunted. "Sure! Fighting, I suppose, like you always did—you two. Can't live together and can't live apart! And if you say my Red's got himself mixed up with any junction trash, you lie. He ain't! I'm his father and I know! Even this new girl he's got himself engaged to, can't keep him from breaking his heart over you!"

Pitt thrust himself forward. His face was gray, but his eyes were black and hot; fright fought with the anger that filled them—a fright that Bobbie saw, and that multiplied itself to her own wild terror.

Fastening his fingers on Bobbie's sleeve, he swung her behind him. He said to Sandy: "I don't know anything about Bobbie's being over at your place last night, and I don't know anything about what she's just been telling you, but if your precious Red has been playing round with Bill Nolan's girl, and Nolan caught him at it, he's probably got what's coming to him. For Nolan's disappeared. He didn't show up for work last night, and he hasn't been near so far this morning. Find him if you can. I can't. And I want him worse than you do!"

The old man was stamping down the steps, when Bobbie found her voice:

"Uncle Sandy," she sobbed hysterically, "oh, Uncle Sandy, take me with you! Let me hunt Red with you! I love him! I'll do anything to find him!" But against that stubborn, disappearing back, Bobbie's voice trailed off into a futile wail, and Pit was talking to her, his voice knife-edged:

"If you're through making a fool of yourself and of me, I'd like your story. And I'd like it straight! What do you know about Red and Hulda and Bill Nolan? I want to know what's being going on round here behind my back."

"There has been too much going on behind every one's backs," Bobbie cried, and told him of Red and Hulda in the drug store the day before, of what Hulda had said, of Nolan who had watched them and of the hate in his eyes.

When she had finished, she said, calm with the calmness of utter despair:

"And now he's killed Red! And it's my fault for not warning him!" Then with rising passion: "Last night—— Oh, I could kill myself! Talking with him—having him right there before me—and not telling him!"

"There's another little thing I'd like to know about," Pitt broke in thickly, his face a twist of fury. "What were you doing over at the

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McMaster camp last night?" Without waiting for an answer, he continued furiously: "What is this—a race between you and Hulda? You've got to a pretty level, when you play yourself against a girl like her for that double-crosser's favors! The minute your father's out of sight, running after him——"

"She—she didn't run after Red! She ran after me!"

The words came from Honey's opened door, and hearing them, Pitt's voice dribbled off into a half-muttered sneer; swinging to follow his startled eyes, Bobbie found her own angry denial, stilled on her tongue.

Honey was standing there, a wan, white-faced Honey with mussed golden hair, and swollen, tear-dimmed eyes. Her negligee trailed its froth of silk and lace about her; her shoulders rose from it, white as milk, and her mouth was curled into a pitiful crimson droop, like a baby's mouth, soft with pleading:

"Oh, Pitt!" she wailed, "Pitt! I can't stand it any more. Take me away! Please, Pitt, take me away from this awful place! It does things to people—terrible things! Last night I tried to bomb the river bank the way old Tim said up here at the cottage! Bobbie doesn't love you; she told me so. She said she wouldn't marry you ever, and I thought—I thought, maybe if I could give you the bonus money, if I could bring you something big, you'd love me so much you'd want to marry me instead. Then you wouldn't mind the old company you're so crazy after. But I couldn't! I didn't know how. And then Bobbie found me, and I ran away——" Her voice broke.

Pitt laughed—a strange laugh, that died against thin, drawn lips.

"You tried to blow a hole in that river bed because you loved me? You thought you'd be doing a big thing for me if we won the bonus? You little fool! Didn't I tell you to be patient, that I had a scheme—to leave things to me? Doing a fool thing like that—and now Nolan! Who knows what's happened there! Murder, maybe!" He swung on Bobbie, his face contorted, his lips twitching:

"You've got this much, you might as well have the rest," he snarled. "I've been gambling for a big stake, and I've lost. It's got away from me—the whole thing! Money, ambition, the girl a fellow loves—those were the things I was fighting for, and I didn't care much how I fought, either. But when it comes to murder——" He broke off, his expression horrified. Then:

"Why in Heaven's name did Red have to go sticking his nose into things that didn't concern him? Why didn't he do as any sane man would have done—let the bonus come his way and been glad? Instead of that; he's been spying, sneaking, using Nolan's girl to checkmate every move I've made! Watching everything I did——"

All her life, Bobbie was to remember the sudden white flood of understanding that swept her. One minute Pitt was there before her, his words a meaningless jumble in her terror-stricken brain, and the next he had vanished, wiped out in the flame that had burst within her—a clean white flame, that pierced the dark muddle that for so long had been her mind.

"Oh, I know, I know!" she was crying. "I've been so blind! It's true, what Red told me! He's been fighting for us—for dad and me—all this time, just as he said he was!

"You've never wanted to win

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"Oh, Pitt!" Honey wailed. "Take me away from this awful place! Bobbie doesn't love you; she told me so. She said she wouldn't marry you ever. You love me; marry me instead."

that bonus, Pitt! You and Nolan have been behind all these terrible things that have happened! Hiding those crates that Red found and brought back to Tim. Trying to bomb the form sheds with the fuse that Red found and stamped out! You thought dad would turn the company over to you, as he said he would, and you could marry Honey

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and have the company, too. You thought you could blame it all on Red! And you could have, if it hadn't been for Hulda, and the fact that Red loved me! He loved me!"

Her voice, swinging like a bell against the silence, rose to a crescendo of triumph. She flung her arms above her head, and the sun, sweeping through the open door, flooded her face.

"Red, darling! You've loved me all the time! Oh, why haven't I seen before? How could have I been so blind?"

She caught at Pitt's arm: "Don't you see?" she sobbed. "Hulda loved Bill Nolan. She knew what he was doing, and she was scared. She wanted to—to save him. She told Red the things Bill told her, so Red could keep them from happening. She knew they could have sent Nolan to the penitentiary if they'd caught him. And Nolan thought she was in love with Red! And so he—he——"

A sob broke in Bobbie's throat—a terrified ghost of a sob. The glory in her face faded to a pale horror of realization, and her words died to a whisper, that lost itself against bloodless lips:

"And now he's got Red. He's killed him, maybe! Oh, help me, dear God! Please help me!"

Unconsciously, her fingers were still clutching Pitt's arm. He shook them free.

"I'm after Nolan!" he cried, and his voice trailed back over his shoulder, while his feet sent the gravel and sticks to flying on the downhill path.

"Wait!" Bobbie wailed. "Wait, Pitt!" And then she was tearing on her clothes, smoothing her tumbled hair with mad hands, lacing boots with racing fingers. She ran down the path toward the bridge, banging through the office door, scattering papers.

"Where's Pitt?" she threw at the startled faces that looked up at her wild entrance. But even as she asked, she knew what the answer would be.

He had taken the car and gone, making no explanation.

She found Tim. He was seventy feet up in the air, walking the scaffolding of the new arch, directing the pour. The place was feverish with hurry, filled with turmoil.

"Tim!" she shrieked. "I've got to see you, Tim!" He saw her and waved her away. She started to go to him, climbing, monkeylike, by the framework, but a man's hands clutched at her and pulled her back.

Leaning down from his dizzy height, Tim bellowed through cupped hands: "Get that crazy kid out o' here, if you have to chloroform her! Want the old man to come back and find her killed?"

In a frenzy of desperation, Bobbie fought and struggled. She bit, hit and kicked, then suddenly she quieted, and the man's arms dropped from her.

Her attempt to reach Tim, and the utter abandon of terror that had swept her at its failure, had cleared her mind of the fog that had held it. She tried to plan as calmly as her pounding heart would let her.

Every minute, every second counted. She mustn't lose a single one. With her father gone, with Tim refusing to see her, there was only one place left to turn. That was—Hulda.

"If I go to her," Bobbie thought, "and ask her to help me find Nolan, she'll help me. If I show her my heart and what's in it, she can't refuse me! She'll help me save Red, because she knows what it is to love,

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because in saving my man she'll save hers!"

Even as her thoughts took shape, forming themselves into words that cried against her lips, she was running toward a battered old car that stood parked by the office door. It was an errand car, left in gear, its engine running, while its driver stood with hands full of packages, half in, half out the opened door.

She pushed him aside, the impact of her flying body sending him gasping, stumbling. She climbed to the seat. Her foot hard on the gas, she swung into a one-wheeled turn. Then she was racing away.

She heard some one yelling at her: "Hey! Hey! Where you going? Where you taking that car? Stop!" And she laughed, her laugh trailing crazily back above the engine's roar.

CHAPTER IX.

Bobbie found Hulda in the kitchen of the huge, dingy old hotel. She was alone. The noon rush was over, and she was washing the floor. Her capable hands were wet and soapy, her gingham dress clung wetly to her, and damp wisps of hair, escaping from the golden braids that wound her head, clung to her cheeks. Her eyes were swollen with crying, and marring the flushed beauty of her peasant face, a livid bruise darkened cheek, lip and broad, low brow. It was a horrible bruise, that made Bobbie wince and cringe.

"Nolan?" Hulda said sullenly, in answer to Bobbie's stammered questioning. "How should I know where Bill Nolan is? That man Carson came over here a minute ago, too, asking me the same thing. I'm telling you nothing. I've done too much telling already for my own good," and she touched her cheek, her eyes hard.

"Nolan gave me that," she said, "for trying to keep him out of the pen." Then with sudden passion: "I hate men. They're all alike—beasts!"

It wasn't until Bobbie had blurted out her story from dry, parched lips of what she had seen at the drug store the night before—of Nolan's watching, hate-filled face, of Red's disappearance and the blood-stained, empty car—that Hulda broke down.

Flinging herself in a chair, she buried her braided head in her arms. "Bill's done it!" she sobbed. "He threatened to do it! He's killed Red McMaster! He came in here last night drunk, and swore he was going to get him. And he has! He's taken him to that shack of his up in the hills, and he's—he's killed him! And it's all my fault! Because I tried to save him! Because I mixed in when I had no business to! Because——"

Bobbie cried: "Shack! What shack? Where?" She shook the heaving shoulders. She threw her questions down at the half-crazed girl, repeating them over and over, until, hearing at last, Hulda raised her bruised, tear-swollen face.

"It won't do no good," she said heavily. "It won't do no good to go there, I know it won't. It's—it's over with, by this time. Whatever he was going to do to Red, he's done, and if he's still there—and drunk—he'll kill us both as well."

Bobbie laughed mirthlessly. "A lot I'd care what he did to me if he's killed Red," she said.

Looking at Bobbie silently for a moment, the girl answered, her rich, soft voice heavy with the tears behind it.

"A girl doesn't care much about

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"How should I know where Bill Nolan is?" said Hulda. "I'm telling you nothing. I've done too much telling already for my own good." Then with sudden passion: "I hate men. They're all alike—beasts."

anything when she loves a man, does she? Not even things like this!"—touching her cheek again.

"You love Red. I love Bill. He hurts me, but he's probably needing me. Come, I'll show you the

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shack." And jumping up, dressed as she was, she followed Bobbie out to the car.

Bobbie never forgot that ride on the logging road up the mountain side, axle deep in ruts; the acrid tang of burning forests that hedged them in; the silence, broken only by the scrape of the low-hung branches, and the *throb-throb* of the car.

With Hulda's soft gutturals to guide her, Bobbie followed the twisting way. Where the road wound round an outspreading cliff, a path shot off—a footpath, which ordinarily would have been hidden by bunches of sumac, laurel and wild grapevines. But now the vines were torn loose, the ground was littered with leaves and broken branches, and, caught on a twig and fluttering there, was the torn sleeve of a man's khaki shirt, like a sign, pointing the way.

There was no need of words. Bobbie stopped the car. She climbed out and Hulda followed her. They put stones beneath the wheels.

Bobbie said: "You'd better go first, Hulda. You know the way. I'll follow." Haste seemed to have left her. An awful quiet held her in its grip, paralyzing her fear. The noise of her pounding heart and her labored breathing, worried her in a strange, detached way.

Even with the tumbled-down, weed-grown shack ahead of them at last, standing with Hulda beside its open door, looking inside, she still clung to that dreadful stillness.

It wasn't until she saw Red—until she met his wide-open eyes and heard his voice calling her name, that it broke—that she found her voice, and answered her name with his.

He was lying bound on a rude cot in a corner of the tiny cabin. There was a bandage about his flaming head. His face was white and hollow-eyed, and caked with blood and dust. His clothes were torn, but he was smiling at her with the tenderest, the sweetest smile it seemed to Bobbie she ever had seen.

But before she could move, before she could reach him to sob out her pleas for love and forgiveness, he was crying at her:

"Bobs! Quick, find a knife and cut me loose! Pitt's over there somewhere, and Heaven knows what condition he's in! And that maniac of a Nolan's on his way back to the valley to burn the bridge and the dam—make a clean sweep of the works, before he comes back here to finish up on us! There isn't a minute to lose!"

Then she was on her knees beside him, hacking with an old kitchen knife at the ropes that held him; letting her lips lie for an instant against his chafed and bleeding wrists; freeing his ankles and holding him, his long frame towering above her, as he swayed stiffly and stamped the blood back into his numbed and aching feet.

Over in a dark corner, they saw Hulda and went to her. She was shivering and touching a sprawling body with fearing hands.

Red pushed her aside, and took her place. For a long minute, he listened; then raising himself upon feet still unsteady, he laughed: "That's Pitt, Hulda, but don't worry. He isn't dead. He's only out. That Bill of yours—he sure packs an awful wallop." As Hulda and Bobbie looked at him, startled, he explained:

"He came up here about an hour ago and tried to make Nolan let me loose. They had a scrap—about the prettiest scrap I've ever seen. But there's no time to gas about it now. We've got to bring Pitt to, and get

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going, if we're going to save the bridge and the dam, and keep that darned crazy fool Bill of yours from running himself into the pen in spite of everything we can do. Let's get busy!"

They brought water and doused Pitt with it. They shook, pounded and thumped. They got him at last, groggy and only half-conscious, down the narrow path to the parked car, and pulled him in. The blow that had felled him had been a terrible one. His lips were green-edged, his skin yellow paste.

In spite of his sickness, he tried to talk: "Drive like the devil! He will try the bridge first. We'd planned one more go for to-night. I've been crook long enough. I'm coming clean." He stopped, exhausted. Then after a while:

"We'll save those jobs—yours and Brent's, if I die for it. And whatever they hand me, I'm taking. Afterwards, if Honey still loves me, we're beating it back to the East, where we belong, Honey and I. This is your world, McMaster, yours and Bobbie's, not Honey's and mine."

But Red said nothing at all. He was too busy, his lips grim, his eyes on the road before him, his knuckles showing taut and white on the wheel.

It had been a long, slow drive up. It was a long drive back, but not a slow one. They teetered and tipped and swayed. Branches cracked above them, the gravel flew beneath their flying wheels. There was the roar of the exhaust, the splutter and throb of the pounding engine, the junction with its lights whizzing by like fireflies in the darkness, and then the valley road, unrolling its dusty white ribbon before them.

It was on the ridge, where, through the break in the trees, Bobbie had had her first view of the bridge, that Red slowed, then brought the car to a sudden stop.

"Look!" he said. "Good Heaven! Look!"

And following his pointing finger, Bobbie saw what she had seen on that first and never-to-be-forgotten evening—the bridge—but not as she had seen it then, a fairy thing against a moonlit sky.

There was nothing fairylike about it now. It was frightening, terrible! There were smoke clouds rolling up from it, and long tongues of fire licking greedily at the black night sky. Even where they stood, the smell of fresh burning wood came up to them, to mix with the stale smoke scent of the heavy air.

For a moment they stared.

"We're too late," Bobbie cried miserably, while Pitt groaned, and Hulda covered up her face with her hands. But Red was out of the car, running down the hill and shouting back to Bobbie:

"Take the car on down to the bridge. I'm getting help. Tell Tim I'll bring them along the river path—every man we've got, all the

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pumps and hose. Step on it, Bobbie! Tell him to keep fighting."

What happened after that was always a dream to Bobbie—a feverish nightmare of incidents crowding one upon another, across the turbid background of a weary, confused brain.

As they swung wildly into the circle of light that was their camp, dark, sweaty, soot-streaked figures flocked about them. Hands grabbed at Pitt and helped him to the ground, then at Bobbie. They were Tim's hands. He was naked to the waist. His thin, ribbed body heaved as he talked. Dried tobacco juice dripped with the sweat down the crevices of his chin.

At Pitt, he croaked: "Great supe you are! Where you been? Nolan fired the gasoline tanks. If the blaze catches the false work, we're gone! He's crazy drunk. We got him tied up, down at the office."

And to Bobbie, his tiny eyes gimlet holes in his nutcracker face: "Get up to the cottage an' fix bandages and liniment and get a bed ready! That darned fool, yellow-haired friend of yourn—that gal from the city—she's hurt. She found Nolan and give the alarm, just as he set off the pump, and the flames got her. She's hurt bad. She——"

And then the old man was crying, his face twisting, the tears streaking his dirty cheeks: "The kid and the bridge—the whole business!" he blubbered. "It's going to kill your pap, Bobbie! If Sandy was here, now, or Red! If they was fighting with me! If——"

Bobbie caught his arm. "Look!" she cried. "Down by the river path, Tim! Look! They're coming —Red and Uncle Sandy and the whole McMaster crew!"

They did come—trucks and chemicals, men and water pumps, hose and buckets. They swarmed over the place, flooding it.

Red, sweat-streaked, his hair flaming crimson as the flames he fought, his bandages bloodstained and horrible, was everywhere, snatching single-handed at burning timbers, directing and giving courage to Tim's tired-out men, as well as to Tim, himself.

And Sandy McMaster became "old Sandy himself" once more, swearing at the blazes as he fought against them.

But Bobbie, back in the cottage where they had carried Honey—the doctor from the junction, Pitt and herself—neither saw nor heard. She was too busy. There was water to boil, oil-soaked clothes to hand to the doctor's motioning hand, instruments to sterilize. Pitt tried to help. He was useless. His hands shook like a baby's, his eyes were dimmed with tears. He found a chair beside Honey's bed and slumped there, his head in his hands, his eyes never leaving her small, pain-racked face.

Daylight was breaking, when Bobbie, finding time to breathe at last, leaned against the balcony rail and stared down into the smoke-filled mists below.

Behind her, Honey was still at last. Swathed in bandages, she lay, white as the pillows that held her. Pitt, on his knees beside her, had his dark head buried against her hand.

The doctor was leaving. His voice was tired, but cheery. His eyes smiled.

"She'll be fine," he said, "and she won't bear a scar. They taught us how to treat burns right, out at the front. She'll be as pretty as ever, once those bandages are off. Never fear."

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Pitt lifted a ravaged face, and turned it toward them. "Pretty!" he croaked. "Man alive! What do I care about her beauty beside her life!"

That was when Pitt had spoken for the first time. Lifting a ravaged face, he had turned it toward them: "Pretty!" he had croaked. "Man alive! What do I care about her beauty beside her life!" And turning back to Honey, he had put his lips to Honey's fingers, and kissed

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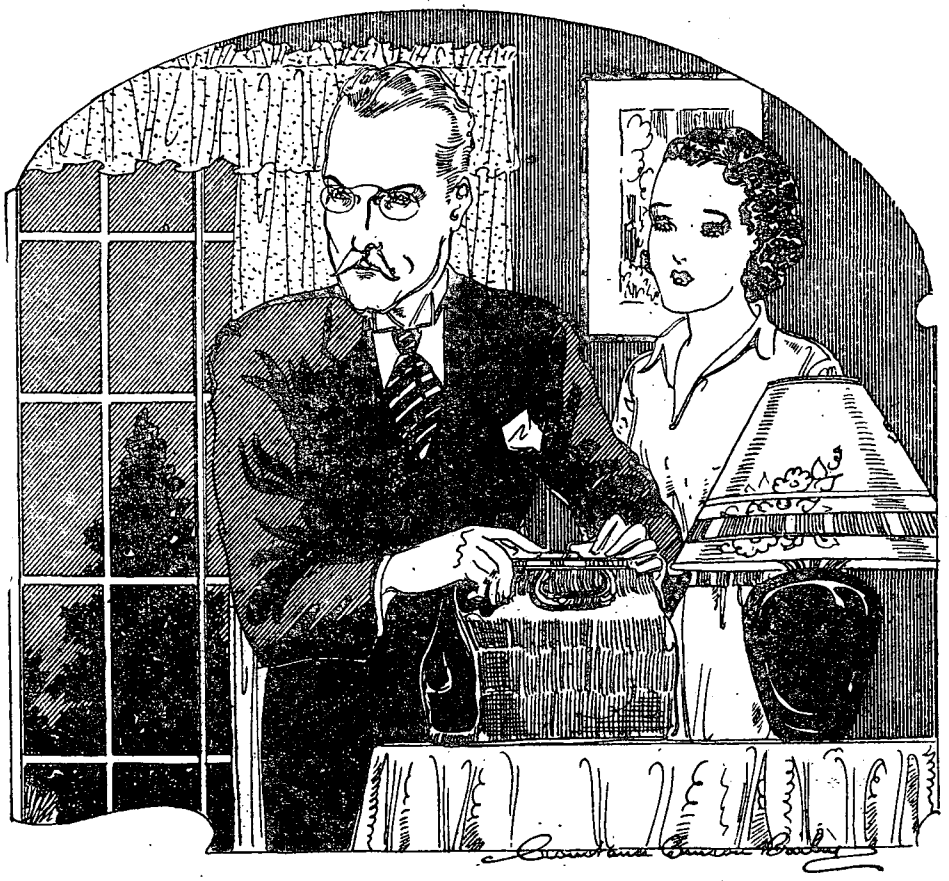

them one by one with swift, tender little kisses.

Bobbie was thinking of that now, of the love in his eyes, that had washed from them all the cruelty, selfishness and greed.

She was thinking of Hulda and Nolan, a sobered, chastened, frightened Nolan—a Nolan with the money she had given him in his pocket, and Hulda by his side. She was thinking of the ranch her father owned out West, where Hulda was to take him, and where her love would guide him.

And because she was afraid to think of Red—afraid for the very agony of joy that filled her—she thought of her father instead, not of the bonus he had lost, but of the friendship he had won. She thought of old Sandy, fighting shoulder to shoulder with Tim, sweating, chewing, swearing. And, turning at the sound of footsteps on the path, she saw them coming toward her, dimly at first, as though out of a dream, with the mists swaying and swirling about them.

There was Sandy and her father, arm in arm. There was old Tim, limping a little, but grinning up at her, his bleary old eyes squinting with the burn of smoke and dust. And there was Red, tall and straight against the gray of the morning sky, his blue eyes shining, his bandages dragging crazily. He was holding out his arms and smiling to her, and suddenly the walls were reeling, the floor was swaying, and she was clutching wildly at nothing at all.

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From an immense distance, from some place millions of miles away, she heard her father's: "Catch her, Red. The poor kid! It's seeing me back like this, on top of everything else, that's got her. Hold her while Sandy and I go in to Honey. Tim, you old ape! What you staring at? Come along with us. Where's your sense? Don't you know when three's a crowd?"

Tim grinned and then followed Robert Brent and Sandy.

And then Red's arms were about her; his cheek was pressing smoke and grime on hers, and his lips, with the tang of smoke on them, were holding hers, drawing at her heart, drinking her in with breathless hunger.

And Red's voice was whispering in her ears; foolish, senseless whisperings. They were not the things he should have told her—of the hunch that had sent Robert Brent from one train to another homeward bound, before his journey was half over, that had brought him back to camp to take a hand in the final conquering of the fire.

Not of the reconciliation between his father and hers—the long handclasp and the straight, level meeting of eyes.

Not of the crew of McMaster men who were already working down below to repair the damage the fire had wrought, nor of the race for the bonus, which was a race no more, as there was only one company to win it—Brent & McMaster—Brent & McMaster this time, to stay.

Not of these things at all! What did they care for such things as those, this red-haired boy and this brown-haired girl, locked tightly in each other's arms?

What Red really told Bobbie was: "I love you. There hasn't been a day, a minute, or a second in all the four and a half years we've been apart, that I haven't loved you. I'll love you till the world stops turning, and the sun stops shining."

And Bobbie was saying—whispering the words up against Red's ears! "And I'll be your tomboy wife, Red, because I can't help myself. But sometimes I'll wear skirts, darling—grand skirts that fluff about me, and I'll wind a ribbon in my hair, and we'll close the door on all the world, and there'll be no one, but just us two together!"

And the sun, peeping up over the sky's rim, found them there—a single outline—to shine upon and bless.

THE END.

COQUETTE

A ROSY petal fluttered down
Where roses never grew.
I looked up to the window ledge
And then I saw 'twas you.

I felt the nearness of your lips
And pressed them close to mine.
Their dewy sweetness left with me
The flush of rosy wine.

DORIS I. BATEMAN.

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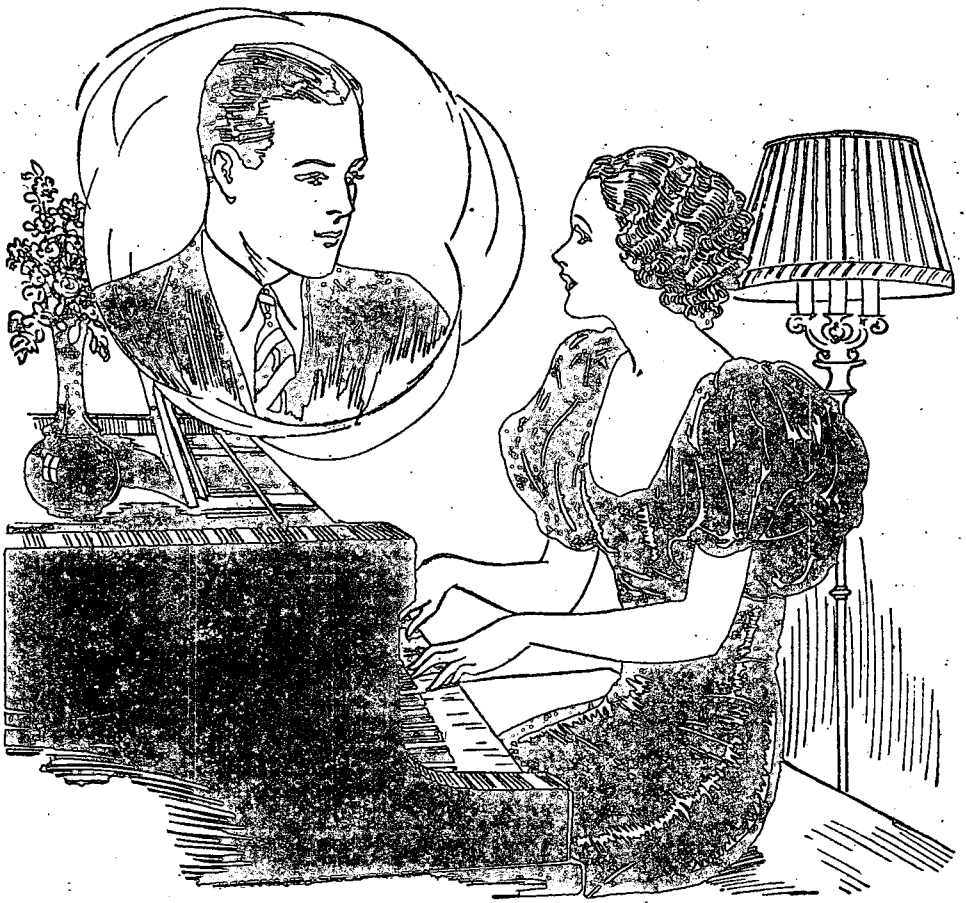

Musical Proposal

By Leslie Gordon Barnard

DIANE came in like something windblown from the garden. The sunshine seemed to be imprisoned in her hair with gay tenacity.

"Mother, isn't it marvelous?"

"A lovely day certainly, Diane."

"But I mean—about Robert. Imagine his turning up like this after years and years, with just this week in town, and then off to the East as soon as he gets orders from his office." Diane swiftly crossed the floor with a dancing step, slipped onto the piano stool, and accompanied a snatch of song:

"On the road to Mandalay
Where the flying fishes play—

"Mother"—she sprang up again—"if he should ask me, you'd let me go, wouldn't you? I mean, if he

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wanted me to join him out there!"

"Diane. How ridiculous!" Mrs. Trench moved quickly to her daughter's side. She held a duster in her hand, following up the inequalities of the maid's work, and she seemed prepared to brush aside Diane's ambitions, which were quite as preposterous as dust on the Trench furniture. "You've been seeing too much of him, gadding about with him every morning, noon and night this week. He—he hasn't said anything?" she inquired anxiously.

"Not quite!"

"Oh. Not quite!"—cynically. "Diane, you're imagining things. You're reading into the affair what isn't there. Of course, it seems very romantic, his coming here like this, after you and he played together as children. As for the East—ridiculous!"

Mrs. Trench moved further on in her vigorous attack of the furniture. She was a large woman, and handled everything with a sort of repressed fury. It was easy to see how she had brought her campaign with Stephen Trench to a victorious conclusion, only two years after the death of his first wife, the mother of Diane. She was a good woman, efficient, in the main tolerant, but without imagination. She resented nothing in Stephen's first wife except a strain of romance, which she could neither equal nor understand. As for the East—it was in the East that Stephen had met Eleanor. Agnes Trench had resolutely set herself to crush a silly romanticism that threatened to crop up in Diane. Besides, how could any one see anything romantic in the East? It was a place not of romance, Mrs. Trench assured herself, but of fleas and privations, and heathen gods and snakes that got under one's bed—a most uncomfortable place. Permit Diane to go East? Ridiculous!

The telephone rang.

"For you, Miss Diane."

Mrs. Trench watched her daughter go, listened but could hear nothing. Then Diane came back, her eyes large and troubled.

"It was Robert. He's got word to go. He has to take the eleven-thirty train to-night. And he'll be busy until this evening. Oh, it's horrid—horrid."

Mrs. Trench felt herself safe in offering motherly sympathy; inwardly, she was highly relieved.

"He'll be over this evening?"

"Yes, mother. We'll go for a drive and"—sudden color stained her satinlike cheeks, her eyes became distant and her voice dreamy—"he'll tell me to-night——"

Mrs. Trench's voice sharpened.

"To-night?" she said crisply. "Yes, of course. Now, let me see. How appropriate. A little farewell party for Robert. Ice cream, cake, flowers, and candles."

"But, mother, we'd rather——"

"There's Mrs. Prosser and Lu," counted Mrs. Trench quickly, "and Grandma Prosser, if her rheumatism's better. They all knew Robert as a boy, of course. And George Milson is sure to be there, so attentive to Lu, and such a nice young man." She sighed, then continued hastily as Diane opened her mouth to speak. "And do look up Aunt Emily's number. I never can remember it. She and Uncle Albert, of course, must be asked."

"But, mother——"

"Diane, you're not going to be ungracious when I'm only trying to do something nice and appropriate for Robert before he goes?"

"N-no, mother."

Mrs. Trench nodded approvingly and swept out of the room. Next to diplomacy, arrangements were

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the breath of life to her. She had, she thought, managed this rather well. Robert would have a chance for serious conversation with Diane to-night, only over her dead body. Why, a thing like this would upset all her own plans for Diane!

Stephen Trench, coming home at five from the office, found his house embowered in flowers from the garden, his wife in her best gown, and Diane wandering about like a lost soul. To look at Stephen Trench was to see a typical suburbanite, settled down to middle-aged routine, a bit lined about the face, a bit dull about the eyes, with a contentment that was built on successive resignations. Only now and then Stephen was different. Touch one certain chord in him and the man became alive, embers of a lost youth flaring up in him.

He stood in the hallway surveying the proceedings.

"Have I forgotten a birthday, or something?"

Mrs. Trench came forward briskly, and, with a half glance toward the drawing room and Diane, drew him aside, explaining briefly. Stephen Trench took off his straw hat and stroked the one wisp of hair on his head that still grew under careful cultivation with vaseline and brush.

"But is it quite fair to them?"

"Stephen, you don't suggest that I am not doing the right thing!"

"No, no, my dear, only——"

"Why, they've only just met—at least for the first time since childhood, which doesn't count—and with him going away at once, why should everything be upset? I know young girls. She'll fret and pine for weeks, maybe, but in the end wonder why she'd been such a fool. And as for Robert, he'll find plenty of distractions out there."

"You say he's going where?"

Mrs. Trench looked away.

"The—oh, out East, in some outlandish place." She hurried on: "It might be all right under other circumstances. But with two such youngsters, it's just a passing fancy, and Stephen, I must ask you to back me up. We must get them through until after eleven, safely. Then he'll go away and with lots to think about, he'll forget her. But if they have time to talk, he may propose something ridiculous, and that we mustn't allow. You understand, Stephen?"

"Quite!" he said dryly.

She gave him a quick glance, but her lips said:

"I know I could count on you."

He tossed his hat on the rack and went out into the garden. For all the filled bowls inside, the paths rioted with nasturtiums on both sides; hollyhocks waved in the breeze from the picket fence, and leaves fluttered down from the trees at the end of the garden. The wind was soft but restless, so that he closed his eyes and remained still, letting it sweep over him, feeling old and despairing of his own courage. She could count on him! Yes, of course! He was a fixture, cemented in by a thousand acceptances and resignations. He envied his wife her sureness, her victories, her energy. Feeling tired, he sat on a garden bench; his hands touching the wood, felt a roughness. His eyes went to it. In a silly moment, of course, they had put it there, carving it in the newly bought bench—"S-E." People thought it had to do with compass directions, and took wrong bearings by it. It stood for Stephen-Eleanor." Good heavens, how long ago it seemed!

"Hello, daddy."

"Hello, dear." He looked up.

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thinking: "She's more like her mother every day."

She sat down beside him.

"Has mother told you about Robert?"

"Yes. Too bad he has to go like this, just when you've renewed acquaintance. It's the way of the world, young lady." He tried to speak lightly. He knew he was being a coward, caught in the usual diplomacy and insincerity of pretending. She said, after a pause:

"Is it the—the way of the world to step on people deliberately?"

"My dear!"

"Oh, you know, daddy. You know why mother's doing all this, having people in, pretending to be nice to Robert. She's afraid—afraid to let us be alone. So she robs us of the few hours we have. I won't stand for it!" Her chin was rebellious.

He patted her hand.

"Your mother means well, dear."

Diane flung at him: "She thinks the East is all horrid. Is it?"

Stephen Trench spoke only after consideration.

"The East is like the West, Diane—not all good, not all bad. We make whatever place we are in, ourselves. We create it with our own eyes, our minds, and hearts." He paused, then put a hand on her knee. "The East, for me, was a place of miracle. But so was this garden."

A voice called from the house: "Stephen! Diane! Could you help me, please? There are some things to be done." They faced each other. He patted her hand.

"Try to remember, Diane dear. Your mother means well. She's done a lot for both of us." How often had he said things like that, extending to Diane the bonds of his own subjugation?

"Yes, daddy. I'll try."

Mrs. Trench, with smiling mouth and unsmiling eyes, welcomed them as helpers in the rearrangement of furniture. Everywhere one looked were the earmarks of an occasion. She was determined to give Robert a good farewell.

Aunt Emily and Uncle Albert came to share a hasty supper, and Aunt Emily was taken aside right after and told the news. Uncle Albert was not permitted to enjoy this confidence. He had a frank manner that was disconcerting. He never beat about the bush, or said things obliquely, or fluttered expressive eybrows, like Aunt Emily. He was, declared the sisters, "entirely lacking in subtlety," though there were strange, disconcerting moments when he spoke with his tongue very much in his cheek. Aunt Emily, unlike Mrs. Trench, was pale, and painted pictures not unlike herself. It was whispered that her genius was burning her out, but the family doctor rudely said her consumptive look was likely to last out threescore and ten.

"You did quite right, Agnes!" agreed Emily. "Of course, I knew the Pennels, and Robert once broke one of my frames with stones when he was quite a child. But really, his mother was—well, you remember her—she was just a Brunton. As for this Eastern business, it is quite absurd."

Agnes Trench felt strenghtened. She was most gracious to Robert Pennel when he arrived, ushering him immediately into the drawing room, calling sweetly to Diane who had been sent upstairs for something unnecessary: "Robert is here, Diane, dear!" Aunt Emily engaged Robert instantly in conversation. She spoke in vague, broken sentences, full of incomplete significances, the trend of which Robert

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For an instant Diane and Robert were together. As he towered over her, she smiled up at him. Her eyes spoke volumes though her lips merely said: "It's horrid, isn't it? All these people."

had not time to get before other guests arrived. Then conversation became general.

Diane, marooned across the room, could only exchange glances with Robert. An adult and garrulous world had swallowed them both. Mrs. Trench, in a strategic position, kept a silent but impressive guard on Diane's every speech or act. As soon as George Milson arrived, she said, they would play bridge.

"Do you think Robert's changed much?" she asked brightly. "He seems just a boy to me still." She turned to the guest. "Of course, I didn't live here then, Robert, just visited with the Prossers."

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Everybody looked at Robert, assessing him.

"Your mother used to keep you very neat," mused Grandma Prosser. "I declare, she had your little pants out on the line every blessed day."

"Mother!" exclaimed Mrs. Prosser.

"And Diane's were, too," asserted grandma vigorously. She was always goaded on by tactful interference. "That was before your time, Agnes. Eleanor did her own washing then. For myself I don't trust these laundries. I——"

Aunt Emily interposed hastily: "Have you seen the Loan Exhibit in town? It's not—that is to say—the modern, you know, in conflict. Daring, but a little cold.

The doorbell rang at this point.

"There's George," said Mrs. Trench with relief. "George, how good of you. We're just dying for some bridge. I think you know every one. Oh, Robert, this is George Milson. George, Robert Pennel."

The young men shook hands. From an obscure corner where he had hidden himself, Stephen Trench sized them up. George was a mouse-colored man, eminently correct in an artificial way; against him, Robert's natural, half-boyish ease warmed Stephen's heart. George Milson was perfectly suited to Lu, he thought. They would be ceremoniously married, furnish their house with scrupulous regard to conservative standards, obey every precept of matrimony implicity, and die respected and unknown outside their own street. Stephen Trench sighed. He had pretty nearly got there himself. And it was all right. These people were the backbone of the social order, he had no doubt. They hadn't enough imagination to go wrong. You couldn't expect backbones to get out of shape suddenly. Stephen laughed to himself, but Diane shot him a glance—hurt, dismayed, in the next instant, almost hopeful—and his humor died.

They were moving to the tables now. For an instant Diane and Robert were together. As he towered over her, his eyes fixed on her, she smiled up at him. Her eyes spoke volumes though her lips merely said:

"I'm sorry. It's horrid, isn't it? All these people."

Stephen saw their young misery through these mutual smiles, and he experienced a fierce pang, a desire to jump up and cry out that this room, these people, this bridge, was a sacrilege against youth, romance, and a summer night.

"Stephen," Mrs. Trench's voice brought him to earth. "Will you fetch the punch, dear? You don't mind not playing, do you? And then you can chat a bit with Grandma Prosser."

The four younger people played at one table. Robert and Diane were allowed to partner each other, because, after all, they were across the table and George Milson settled himself down comfortably opposite Lu. Grandma Prosser pulled up a chair and made remarks about the hands she could see. Tiring of that, she returned to the subject of the guest of honor.

"Many's the time, young man," she told Robert, "I've blessed your mother for trying to make a pianist out of you. And Diane's mother, too. Many an afternoon's sleep you've destroyed, fumbling up and down the scales."

Robert brightened.

"I've nothing much to show for it," he said. "But I remember well enough. Diane used to sit at hers

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across the lot with our windows open, and we'd see who could play the loudest. Remember, Diane?"

Her eyes flicked up from the cards to nod to him.

"Well, now," said Grandma Prosser, "we'll have to hear from you both by and by. You'll have to have them play for us, Agnes."

Robert and Diane exchanged quick glances of dismay. After bridge one might escape, but if the evening was to drag on in the bosom of the family, it would be intolerable. Stephen Trench from the doorway saw that glance, and writhed inwardly. He felt a sense of suffocation, as if life had him down and by the throat, and went out into the garden for a sniff of air. The evening had grown cool, and as he looked, a faint glow in the north began to grow and shift and change. Green spears of light moved across the sky, changing, extending, contracting. Stephen returned to the drawing room.

"Drop your cards a minute," he said urgently. "I want to show you something. Hurry!" He thought: "It's working. They're coming!"

Mrs. Trench's voice was distinctly cool.

"What is it, Stephen? A fire? Oh, just northern lights!"

"Oh, lovely," sighed Emily, in the voice she kept for occasions.

"That last bid, Lu," said George. "Why didn't you raise me? I could have taken two more tricks easy as you please."

Grandma Prosser was staring with dim eyes at the heavenly phenomenon. "Once when I was a girl," she began, but nobody was listening.

Uncle Albert was taking the opportunity to get a few puffs at a cigar he'd been aching for, since supper. Agnes allowed cigarettes, but not the heavier smoke.

"Well," Mrs. Trench spoke hurriedly. "I'm sure, Stephen, you meant well, but our game—shall we," she suggested brightly, "get back to it? Diamonds were trumps, weren't they, Albert?"

They began to troop in. On the terrace outside Stephen saw, with a leaping heart, two young people moving not toward, but away from the door. They were on the grass, barely distinguishable now, still gazing up at the mysterious lights of the North. Stephen's own gaze traveled up to them again. They stirred in him an excitement, as if he, like Grandma Prosser, were seeing them again with young eyes. He remembered lying in a canoe for a long summer night, facing upward, with Eleanor silently watching. Now he watched the two figures on the grass, their heads almost touching, their profiles, clear and eloquent in the lovely glow from the sky.

"Stephen!"

"Yes, dear."

"Where are they?"

"Who?"

"Don't be stupid. Robert and Diane, of course!"

He summoned his wits to temporize. Only seconds had passed.

"Oh, there they are!" said Mrs. Trench. He saw her go heavily, decisively across the grass.

"My dear Diane, have you forgotten our guests. Robert, I'm sorry, but do you mind? It's quite chilly, and Diane is so susceptible."

Stephen, withdrawing a little so that his face should not be seen, watched them return. Nothing had happened. Nothing could have been said in those short instants. Diane's delicately tinted face was pale, and her luminous eyes showed distress. Robert looked politely impassive as he followed his hostess indoors. For a brief moment, his

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On the terrace outside Stephen saw, with a leaping heart, two young people together. They were Robert and Diane.

hand brushed against Diane's; their fingers interlocked behind Mrs. Trench's back, and then swiftly untangled themselves.

Mrs. Trench summoned refreshments early. Robert must take the eleven-thirty train, and there was the music to come.

"Robert and I will serve, mother!"

"No, dear. I've asked Ethel to wait up. Robert may pass the napkins. If you will, Robert. They're right behind you."

Stephen Trench returned to his guests moodily, helpless revolt within him, a vast scorn for himself raging. He glanced at his watch. It was nearly eleven. In a short time now, Robert must go. If the youngsters could only escape after the ice cream.

But Mrs. Trench was watching that.

"Our time is so short," she said, taking Robert's empty plate, "we

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must have the music we've promised Grandma Prosser. Do oblige us, Robert."

Chopin, Mozart, Liszt stole into the room, enticed by Robert's fingers. Diane sat near by, her face pale, her eyes misty.

"The boy can play," thought Stephen. "It's not making it any easier for her."

Then Robert turned. "Grandma Prosser will hardly remember my playing like that," he smiled. "Wasn't it more like this, grandma?"

He swung into a curious, rambling improvisation, one motif only repeated with a fierce monotony, then ended with a thumping chord. Then he looked at Diane.

"Your turn," he said.

A flush ran deep and red in Diane's face; her eyes seemed suddenly bright and alive, as if the music had awakened her. She sprang up lightly, seated herself, and a crystal cascade of notes moved under her fingers. She hadn't Robert Pennel's technique and power, but this was fairy music, abandoned, gay, irrepressible. It moved and shifted, bright and exciting, thought Stephen Trench, as the dawn. Then the music ceased. Diane turned to Grandma Prosser.

"And this," she said, "is more the kind of thing you had to put up with from me, grandma."

With childlike, thumping notes, she gave her imitation, conscientiously fingering; then, with a glance at Robert, swung into a song:

> "On the road to Mandalay
> Where the flying fishes play—"

Uncle Albert then stood beside the piano, singing it in a surprising tenor, and Stephen Trench at first with diffidence, then more confidently, stepped up and supplied the bass. The fingers of the girl seemed bewitched.

Mrs. Trench caught her husband's arm:

"Stephen, the car. Get it out. Robert will be late." She was a little pale and distraught, as if an atmosphere, alien and frightening, had caught her unawares. He obeyed. The scent of flowers and of gasoline mingled, and the night seemed full of unanalyzed things. He drove the car around to the front door, seeing them all on the porch: Grandma Prosser, a little bent with her rheumatism, George with his arm linked companionably in Lu's, Uncle Albert puffing a cigar, Emily contributing a languid smile and Mrs. Prosser an eager one, Agnes Trench dominating and repulsing one more ambition for Diane.

"No, darling, you can't go to the station. Uncle Albert will go with father, won't you, Albert? We'll play some anagrams until you get back, and then everybody can take a hand. Good-by, Robert; Good luck."

Robert was shaking hands all around. Then he was facing Diane.

"Good-by, Diane." His eyes were intense, his voice husky.

"Robert—oh, Robert!"

She flung herself into his arms, kissing him.

Oblivious of the audience, he strained her to him, and kissed her lips tenderly.

"My darling," he murmured in a voice as poignantly melodious as his music.

"Diane!" Mrs. Trench's gasp penetrated the air.

The night seemed to hold its breath at this shocking abandon. Certainly, the group on the porch did. Diane drew herself from this public embrace, and swung around to her mother.

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"But, mother, we're engaged. I've promised to marry Robert. I've promised to go out when he sends for me!"

"Come, Robert," said Uncle Albert, suddenly practical. "Or you'll miss the train."

Robert Pennel did not move.

"It's true," he told Mrs. Trench soberly. "I'm sorry if it seems so—so sudden."

Then he kissed Diane again—a long, clinging kiss—and was in the car. Stephen Trench drove as if possessed; the train was caught by inches, but he squeezed Robert's hand in a final message.

"Could you drive a bit slower," asked Uncle Albert, on the way back. "I'd like to finish this cigar." He chuckled suddenly. "Bless youth!" he ejaculated. "Love will find a way, old top."

Stephen Trench said nothing. His sharp satisfaction was tempered by the knowledge that he had yet his wife to face. The guests, as he had supposed, were gone, the anagrams forgotten, good nights said with false gayety. Stephen, hearing raised voices, quickened his steps. Diane was facing her mother and aunt in the room, littered with remnants of a dead party.

"Oh, mother, how could you! You tried, you schemed, just to keep us from those last, few hours. Weren't you ever young? Don't you understand?" Diane's young tones were ringing out passionately.

She broke off at sight of her father in the doorway. Stephen put his arm about her waist silently. Mrs. Trench saw father and daughter clinging together, facing her defiantly, but it remained for Aunt Emily to make the capitulation for her sister. "It's probably all for the best, Agnes."

"For the best," repeated Mrs. Trench, slowly. She looked baffled, beaten, then a faint gleam appeared in her eyes.

"Well," she said decisively, rising, "there is one thing I should like to know, Diane. When, please, did this mad proposal take place?"

Diane went swiftly to her mother's side.

"Mother, you're going to be nice about it, aren't you? I'm so happy and I do want you to see it's for the best, like Aunt Emily says."

"But when, Diane? How——"

Diane looked suddenly radiant.

"It was Grandma Prosser's music," she laughed joyously. "When Robert and I were kids, we used to play to each other across the lot with the windows open. We made up a code so that we could talk to each other."

From the open window came the unmistakable smell of Uncle Albert's cigar, and an equally unmistakable chuckle.

"Proposal by music," said Uncle Albert. "In the bosom of the family. Well, well!"

Mrs. Trench sat down suddenly in the nearest chair.

"Stephen, dear," she said shakily, "will you please fetch me a glass of water?"

Beaten as she was, she looked once more at Diane's radiant face, her sparkling eyes, and her defeat was complete. She held out a hand to the girl.

"I've heard some people say that the East is a romantic place," she was admitting reluctantly, as Stephen returned with the glass of water.

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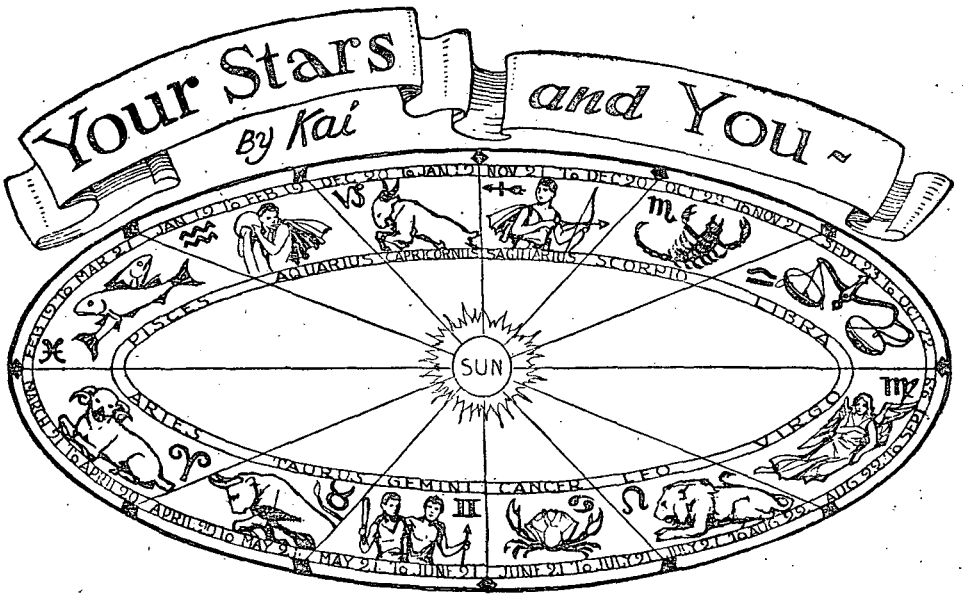

YOUR WEEK

Most of us will like the current seven days. It is a temperamental week, but there will be many things which hold promise and a general feeling of optimism can be expected. The serious periods should be devoted to practical thinking. Each of us has the full coöperation of the planets at this time and results are of our own making. This is the best week generally we have had in some time. There is a New Moon Wednesday, April 3rd, at 7:06 a. m.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday, March 30th ♄

The day begins harmoniously, and the mind will be in good working order. Expect an active morning when the written and spoken word is important. The early-afternoon hours are active, and there will be minor irritations of no consequence. The later afternoon hours are emotional and pleasure is in order. Do not tolerate foolish fears at any period of the day or evening. Pleasure, recreation and sentiment will identify the evening period.

Sunday, March 31st ☺

The morning hours will be more active than usual for a Sunday morning. The period around noon is lethargic, and spiritual and inspirational ideas are in order. The afternoon hours bring the mind into play and the trend will be active. Between 5:00 and 7:00 p. m. there is an interlude which is serious, and quiet and deep thought is in order. Your mind will be able to take care of details, and it would be well to make plans. The later evening hours are entertaining, energetic, and the undercurrent is favorable.

Monday, April 1st ☽

A new business week and a new month and again we find the mind and judgment of major importance. It is an excellent morning for the folks engaged in creative, advertising, and literary work. It is a very good day, even though it is divided into periods which demand practicality and energy in spite of the feelings. The evening is favorable, and it would be well to give serious thought to financial matters.

Tuesday, April 2nd ♂

Domestic inharmony will prevail this morning until 8:00 a. m. unless you are careful. After that you will be active, and there will be many matters which will require atten-

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tion. With any degree of thought it should be a satisfactory business and personal day and you can expect to have a light and enjoyable evening. The main idea about to-day is that it brings matters to a climax. Do not waste your hours, because tomorrow inaugurates a new cycle and you must be ready for it.

Wednesday, April 3rd ☿

There is a New Moon at 7:06 a. m., which begins the new cycle mentioned yesterday. The morning hours are harmonious and pleasant, but business is in order until noon. It is a most efficient day and evening, and you will be able to accomplish much. Even though the slight emotional problems and the pressure of circumstances are upsetting and disturbing to your poise, keep going. Be busy and utilize all your talents.

Thursday, April 4th ♃

The waking hours are emotional and there will be domestic problems to handle. Exciting circumstances can be expected until noon. Stay on the job and avoid rashness and impulsiveness. Consider no idea which is not in keeping with your program and treat the superficial happenings this morning as temporary factors in your life. The afternoon hours are pleasant and good for social relations. The evening hours bring the inclination toward recreation and enjoyment and the general trend is favorable.

Friday, April 5th ♀

Affairs which were started earlier in the week will engage your attention to-day, but you will not be able to do justice to your efficient ideas. There is too much emotion and feeling indicated in the planetary conditions and you will have to postpone vital matters until later.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN

March 21st and April 20th
(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 21st and 27th will have changeable conditions in connection with finances at this time, but a readjustment is in order and you should force issues at this time so that you can prepare for the future, when conditions become better. If born between April 1st and 8th, you will have turbulent conditions in connection with partners and associates, but there is very little that you can do about it. Try to maintain your poise and remember that haste and impulsiveness will defeat your purpose. This is a favorable week socially, but you will probably spend more money than you can afford. If born between April 12th and 20th, you will be relieved of some of the turbulent conditions which have existed in the past and there will be a chance for you to advance your interests. This is a good mental week for the latter group.

April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)

—Taureans born between April 20th and 25th can expect some of the changes they have been anticipating. Deal with older people, reconstruct your lives and see that there is no débris on hand which will prevent you from accomplishing your goal. It is a time for forceful action and a determined program. If born between May 1st and 10th, you will find your intuition helpful at this time, and the week is a pleasant one socially and emotionally. Take care of your health and avoid excesses, remembering to be cautious about minor accidents. If born between May 14th and 21st, you will find discussions and relations with friends beneficial at this time. Make decisions and look to the future. You are relieved of some of the pressure you have experienced the past few months and even though your finances are a problem, you can now proceed with more confidence than you have been able to exhibit in the past.

May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—Geminians born between May 21st and 26th will have responsibility in business and will not be able to exert their personalities to full extent. Expect changes, hectic circumstances and hard work under limiting conditions. If born between June 1st and 9th, there will be confusion in the home and such a pressure of circumstances

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and events that it will be upsetting. The current week holds several upsetting interludes. If born between June 15th and 21st, you will have petty annoyances in business and will be subject to criticism from the public. Execute your work and expand your working conditions, but be careful of the things you say and write, especially to the boss.

June 21st and July 21st
(Cancer ♋)

—Cancerians born between June 21st and 27th will experience changes in connection with friends, and there is the necessity to be serious and do everything which comes under the heading of duty. Expand your interests and build new foundations for efficiency. If born between July 1st and 9th, you will find your intuition active and there will be opportunities for enjoyment and pleasant relations with friends. However, home conditions will be hectic and some of the domestic pressure may prevent you from being as efficient as you desire. If born between July 14th and 21st, you will have new opportunities. It is time for expanding your interests and adopting a new viewpoint. Relations with associates should be harmonious.

July 21st and August 22nd
(Leo ♌)

—Leo people born between July 21st and 27th will begin to feel the pressure of the planets; will be restless and will make minor changes. Conditions connected with the finances of associates will be restricted and no immediate solution to the problem will be reached satisfactorily. If born between August 2nd and 9th, you will have a busy emotional life this week, and there will be moments of personal pleasure. The undercurrent is energetic and alive, and vital matters will require attention. If born between August 14th and 22nd, you will have your emotions and sentiments stimulated, but concentrated thought will have to be given to financial affairs. You might be able to adjust some of the matters which were delayed in the past concerning money which dealt with partners. Much of the pressure in the lives of the latter group has been relieved.

August 22nd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo people born between August 22nd and 28th will have changes and some of their affairs will be satisfactory and some of them pressing. Matters connected with partnerships will become a responsibility and serious thought will be given to associations. Desire for readjustment will be paramount and a feeling of restlessness will prompt you to make necessary changes. If born between September 2nd and 9th, you will be busy and there will be unexpected demands on your income. The current week is pleasant in many spots and social affairs will be enjoyable. If born between September 15th and 23rd, you will be able to capitalize upon present and past efforts and any form of creative work will be satisfying to you. The current week brings the necessity to make decisions and there will be petty worries, but you will find your mind responsive and you will feel better than you have in the immediate past.

September 23rd and October 22nd
(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 23rd and 30th will find work and their jobs irksome and confining at this time and will have to undertake added responsibility. It is no time to change positions and there may be changes in connection with the finances of partners and associates. If born between October 3rd and 10th, you will feel upset personally and will have to watch your temper. Give serious thought to spiritual matters and inward growth and expect the current week to bring more harmonious relations with associates. If born between October 14th and 22nd, you will have to use your head this week in connection with work and your job and decisions will have to be made. Petty annoyances are only temporary. It is a time to capitalize upon your talents, expand your interests, and make every effort to increase your income.

October 22nd and November 21st
(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 22nd and 29th will have upheaval and changes in connection with partners and associates, but these adjustments will be favorable to you later in the year. Accept responsibility, stand on your own feet, do not be too opinionated, but see that your own judgment and authority are recognized. If born between November 3rd and 19th you will find your intuition increasing, will recognize opportunities as being at hand and should use your talents constructively and diligently. This is a week when pleas-

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ure and entertainment will be important to you. If born between November 14th and 21st, you will find pressure relieved in comparison to past months and this week will bring many activities, the need to make financial decisions, and fresh opportunities. Everything you do at this time will reflect upon your judgment and progress in the immediate future. Be confident.

November 21st and December 20th
(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 21st and 28th will have changes in connection with jobs and duties and adjustments in relation to employees and servants. Home conditions will be annoying and there will be domestic pressure. If born between December 2nd and 9th, you should be careful about quarreling with friends. Take your social duties lightly. Employment conditions should be harmonious throughout the current seven days. If born between December 13th and 20th, you will have annoyances and petty worries in the home and with domestic associates at this time, but personal reactions will be pleasant and more satisfactory than usual. Relations with those on the outside will please you more than those immediately connected with your life.

December 20th and January 19th
(Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 20th and 27th will find stability entering their lives and changes are in order. Adjustments are advisable. Conditions can be made better for you than they have in the immediate past. Most of the favorable results depend upon your own efforts. If born between January 1st and 8th, you will have a satisfactory social week, will find your intuition helpful, should not indulge yourself emotionally, but will have many pleasant experiences with those close to your heart. Upsetting conditions and the pressure of circumstances will invade the serenity of your business relations and care should be exerted in all dealings with those in superior positions. If born between January 12th and 19th, you will find your judgment good this week and decisions should be made. Relations with friends will be pleasing and contacts should be made which are valuable to your interests.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 19th and 26th will experience changes and removals in connection with home, property and possessions. It is advisable to undertake a new régime and accept responsibility. There is pressure and a different kind of recognition of duty expected of you than you had the past two years. You will not be able to adjust matters to your complete satisfaction and you will have to work hard at all times. If born between February 1st and 9th, you will be busy and will have to stay close to your job and duties, but there will be opportunities for pleasure during the current week. If born between February 12th and 19th, some of the pressure will be relieved at this time and you can plan to expand in business and reëstablish yourself in the public eye. You will have to make decisions this week in regard to your income and will find your mind responsive.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—Pisceans born between February 19th and 27th will be more serious and deliberate at this time, but will be restless and will see the advisability of reorganizing their lives. Do not procrastinate and do not be morbid. Work and recognize new opportunities and make this a constructive period in your life. If born between March 2nd and 9th, you will have to be careful in dealing with partners and associates and must be patient with the uncertain and confusing factors in this direction. Your personal reactions will be pleasant this week and many phases of your life will be enjoyable. If born between March 14th and 21st, you will feel in an expansive mood this week and will be able to enjoy yourself and handle affairs efficiently. Do not devote too much time to recreation if it interferes with your program and your advancement.

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Miss E. M. P., born July 10, 1913, Connecticut, 7:00 a. m.: Astrology can tell you only the planetary conditions and how you will be inclined. The will to do and how you take advantage of opportunities is up to you. I can see from your chart that it is difficult for you to make definite decisions and act upon your ideas. You have the capacity to do great things with yourself, but I believe your uncertain tempera-

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ment, vacillation, and sensitivity are handicaps. You are intelligent, energetic, and have good basic judgment. Now, you have the coöperation of the planets for the next two years. You should make changes and accept opportunities, the first of which will probably come your way in the early spring. Act with more confidence. Seek opportunities. Expand your personality and make new contacts. Conditions in your home will not be entirely satisfactory, but that should be a separate part of your existence which has nothing to do with your material advancement. Be wise and progressive.

"Star Dust," born February 4, 1916, Maine, 10:50 p. m. Sorry, but I do not omit birth dates, except in unusual cases. Your chart does not correspond with that of the man you mention and I advise a permanent break. There is a lack of sympathy between you and there is no doubt but that you will find some one who will appeal to you more than the current heart interest. There is a definite break coming shortly, anyway, and changes in many directions. I do not advise you to become serious with any one of the opposite sex for about three years—meaning marriage, of course. Do not forget there is a time and place for everything under the sun. Write to me again.

Miss M. L. L., born March 8, 1917, Indiana, 3:45 a. m.: It appears very likely to me that marriage is in store for you folks late this summer. The two charts harmonize and you have much in common. Affairs in general will improve for both of you and even though the economic problem injects itself and you think there should be a postponement, I advise you to proceed with your plans, if possible.

Mr. C. F. W., born January 18, 1912, Ohio, about 4:00 a. m.: There is no doubt about your having artistic talent but I am sorry that you spent your money on a correspondence course. I feel as if you should have had the benefit of class work and a personal teacher. It so happens that I recall the marvelous art institution in your town and I advise you to consult an expert. Make no change in your plans because I feel you have a future in the commercial field. Also, you have just finished a bad planetary period and I am sure you will find more encouragement in future conditions. It will be necessary for you to stay where you are for the present but you will have a change the latter part of the year.

Mrs. A. B., born February 6, 1885, Arkansas, 2:00 a. m.: It was kind of you to write me again and I am sorry your reply has been delayed. Before I answer your question I wish to urge you to continue your astrological studies. You will find it helpful in many ways and your chart is well adapted to it. There is no question in my mind about your instinctive healing ability and inherent knowledge of medicine. It is too bad you were not able to study this in your early life and I am wondering if it would be possible for you to obtain work of an apprenticeship or assisting nature in a clinic or institution. Your intuition is remarkable and you cannot help from pouring forth your strength and giving yourself to each and every case. I would like to see you do something with this unusual talent. You have been relieved of great pressure in your life which has continued in one form or another for about eight years and now is the time for you to make a concentrated effort to improve your circumstances. Any changes in the immediate future will be beneficial. Do not hesitate to associate yourself with some one else who is established. I believe this is your best way of becoming better known.

Mrs. E. B., son born January 31, 1928, Pennsylvania, 9:00 p. m.: I answered you previously about your daughter but have just discovered your second letter about your son. The answer to your inquiry about his talent is in the affirmative. You are fortunate in having such capable, talented children. Proceed with your plans for them.

Mr. W. K., born January 16, 1907, Wisconsin, 11:40 p. m.: It has been impossible for me to answer your letter before now and I am sorry for the delay. Due to the improved planetary conditions you have had since last fall, I am inclined to think you have obtained tangible results. It is difficult for me to tell you specifically about this examination, because even though your chart indicates improvement and fresh opportunities, I do not know just how your own willingness to benefit by them has been demonstrated. However, I want to say that I like your chart. You have balance, a good mind that likes to go to the root of matters and your persistent qualities are very strong. You have

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been operating under limiting influences since 1928 which became critical in 1930 and 1931. Most of that restriction and pressure from the planetary rays has been lifted and you can expect steady improvement in the future. It is a question of building a new foundation for yourself, so allow no opportunity to escape and make every effort to place yourself solidly. You will have to work hard and assume responsibility, but I believe you will be satisfied with results. Best wishes.

MRS. J. B., born May 25, 1889, place not stated, 1:00 p. m.: The circumstances between yourself and the man you mention in your letter are clearly indicated in the two charts. There is an attraction but I cannot see you feeling anything for him which is deep and permanent. Nevertheless, there is another marriage in your life. I think you will marry some one later whom you will like very much—probably in 1937. Do not be hasty about undertaking the responsibility of his family combined with your own. I believe you would regret it.

"NOEL," born December 25, 1891, Michigan, 5:00 a. m.: It was kind of you to write me such a pleasant and frank letter. I can see from your chart that you have not had an easy time of it but whom do you know who has not had his troubles in the past few years? I can promise you improved conditions this year and in 1936 even though they will not live up entirely to your expectations. I hardly know how to answer you about this man you mention. There is a strong bond between you and yet your natures are very opposite in many ways. You have your impulsive moments, but fundamentally you like security, quiet and stability and I see nothing in this man's chart which would guarantee security. He is clever and intelligent but does not have the constancy that you do. Frankly, I do not advise anything of a permanent nature but feel you would make fine friends.

MRS. E. B., daughter, born July 4, 1927, Pennsylvania, 8:30 p. m.: Your daughter is a very emotional type of girl but her chart indicates exceptional talent for dancing. It is fine that you have started her education along these lines so early in life. In mentioning her emotional equipment and her bursts of temperament, I would say these will increase as she becomes older. Her chart also shows the ability to imitate and an inherent sense of showmanship. All of these qualities will assist her in the entertainment world later, of course. The young lady is at a critical stage in her life as to health (this is true of all children her age), so I would not push her too much just at this time. She will have opportunities during the next three years to exploit her talents and conditions will improve steadily. I think she should continue with her piano lessons but suggest that you concentrate upon her dancing. Her chart indicates success in connection with motion pictures, too.

M. W., born April 3, 1914, Iowa, 11:50 a. m.: Proceed with your plans to be an entertainer. I think you would do well in that line of endeavor. There is very little chance that you will marry before 1937.

O. D. M., born June 3, 1900: It was nice of you to write me and express your appreciation of my reply. I shall be glad to hear from you again at any time.

WHY QUESTIONS ARE NOT ANSWERED

Kai does not send answers by mail.

L. E. E. J., March 21, 1890: Your letter was very vague. What "conditions" do you refer to? What did you wish to know about the man born in October?

"Baby-face," March 20, 1918: I must have the man's birth data before I can help you.

Miss F. H. G., October 26, 1906: Your letter was very vague. What "changes" do you refer to?

Miss L. M. B., February 21, 1889: I do not give complete horoscope readings. If you will write again, asking one specific question I will try to help you.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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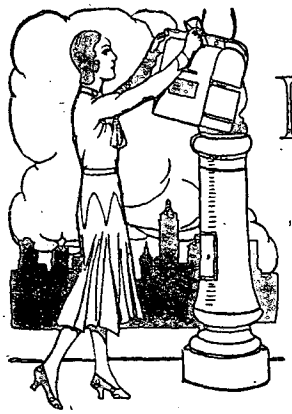

The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to make friends

Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THOSE of you who would like to hear about a country around which center fascinating legends that date back to ancient Aztec Indian days, will surely find Coah Pal a most interesting correspondent. This twenty-year-old, happily married American Pal lives in Mexico. Life never stands still for her; she makes it go! Write to her, girls!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: For a long time I have wanted to join your Friendliest Corner. I am a young married woman of twenty, have no children, and as I am now living in Mexico, I get very lonesome for American friends. I have lots of time to write letters, and much to write about. Won't some of you girls please answer my plea and let me hear from you? I can tell you lots about this country and its legends. I promise to answer all letters promptly.

COAH PAL.

San Toy is married to a sailor.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young married woman of twenty-three. My husband is a sailor, and I would love to correspond with other sailors' wives and sweethearts. I'm fond of reading, writing letters, have traveled in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and will be more than glad to exchange snapshots and answer all letters received. Let's go, Pals!

SAN TOY.

Boys, cheer up Lonely Ben.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please let me join your Friendliest Corner. I'm a boy of seventeen, have recently lost my father, and as I have few friends I am very lonesome. I was born in North Carolina, but am living in New York City. I'm intertested in fishing, dancing, music, and aviation. I intend to become an aviator one of these days. I'll appreciate all letters, and promise prompt replies.

LONELY BEN.

Help her collect pictures of movie stars.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just another girl of eighteen looking for Pen Pals. I have black hair, brown eyes, and love fun and excitement. I hail from Philadelphia, but just now I am living in Maryland. I would like to correspond with girls every-

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where, and especially those who live in this State. My favorite hobby is collecting pictures of movie stars.

MARYLANDER.

Ula can talk on almost any subject.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you please help me find some Pen Pals? I'm a girl twenty years of age, live in California, and would like to hear from girls far and near. I'm interested in dancing, sewing, reading, and can talk on almost any subject. I'll be a sincere friend. Girls, please write to me.

ULA.

She spends her summers in Maine.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of nineteen, and a recent high-school graduate. I have traveled some, and spend my summers in Maine. I like to read, dance, sew, collect souvenirs and photographs of all kinds, and I also enjoy sports. Girls, let's get acquainted!

TRULY YOURS.

This Pal enjoys gay pleasures.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please help me find some Pen Pals. I'm a young man of twenty-four, very broad-minded, interested in everything and every one. My main hobbies are dancing and singing, and I always enjoy a good show, or a lively radio program. I would like to hear from Pals who live on Long Island or in New York. I promise to answer all letters.

WEB.

Don't fail to write to Greenfield Mrs.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I like to write letters and make new friends, and hope that many who read my plea will not hesitate to drop me a line. I'm a young married woman of twenty-six, live in Massachusetts, although I was born in New Jersey. I have two children, and my husband is a salesman. When he is away, and the children are in bed, I have lots of spare time to write letters. Here's hoping some of you will not fail to write.

GREENFIELD MRS.

A Pen Pal from British Guiana.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Do you think any one would care to correspond with a fifteen-year-old girl living in British Guiana? I have very few friends and get terribly lonely. I have black hair, brown eyes, love to swim, and am considered a good sport. I'm always jolly and have a good time wherever I go. I will be glad to exchange snapshots, and promise prompt replies to all letters received.

THERESIA.

Accept Jolly Toots's offer of friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Corner? I would love to hear from girls nineteen years of age or older. I am a girl of nineteen, with brown hair and gray eyes. I promise to answer all letters, and will be very glad to tell all about myself in my first letter. I enjoy dancing, sports, and making friends. Well, girls, who's going to write?

JOLLY TOOTS.

He's good-natured and congenial.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I enter your Corner with an earnest request for Pen Pals? I'm a young man in my twenties, good-natured, congenial, fond of music, art, and books. I also enjoy sports. I will exchange snapshots, and promise faithfully to answer all letters received.

RAYTON.

Maris is at home in the kitchen and garden.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a brown-eyed country girl of twenty-two, enjoy sports, cooking, baking, and gardening. I am anxious to hear from Pen Pals everywhere, and especially those living in Wyoming and Arizona. I have my own camera, and promise to exchange snapshots with any one. I will answer all letters promptly.

MARIS.

Here's a Pal who's interested in England.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl almost twenty years of age, interested in books, pets, dancing, and traveling. I would love to visit England, but since that is not possible, perhaps some English girl who reads this will drop me a line. However, that does not mean I will not enjoy hearing from girls everywhere. I will gladly exchange snapshots. So come on, Pals, and let's get acquainted.

EVLYNN.

Find out more about this friendly Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to correspond with Pen Pals far and near. I'm a young married woman of twenty-three, will exchange snapshots and promise

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to answer all letters received. I'll tell you all about myself in my first letter, Pals, so don't hesitate to write. TINKY.

Fennimore is an advanced student in music and art.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of not quite sixteen, have brown hair, hazel eyes, and am five feet six inches tall. My chief interests are swimming, diving, football, tennis, riding, and life-saving. I am also an advanced student in music and art. Write to me, fellows. I will exchange snapshots and promise prompt replies.
FENNIMORE.

This Nova Scotia Pal loves to make friends.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I hope to hear from Pals everywhere? I am a girl of twenty-two, live in Nova Scotia, and love to make friends. I am interested in skating, dancing, movies, and reading. I have had a few rather interesting adventures, and can tell you all about Nova Scotia. I'll exchange snapshots and poems. Pals, please don't disappoint me!
RHODA E.

Keystone Lois has musical ability.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea for Pen Pals. I'm a girl of eighteen, a high-school graduate, and as I have a position which takes me away from my home town I get very lonesome. I would like to hear from girls everywhere. I enjoy reading, French, athletics, collect stamps, and can play several musical instruments. Girls, write to a true friend.
KEYSTONE LOIS.

A call for good, sensible Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to correspond with married Pals and single girls between thirty and forty years of age, and especially those who are not man-crazy. Although I'm not a man hater, and am married myself, I don't like to hear girls "raving" about every man they meet. I am thirty-one, good-natured, friendly, and my hobby is reading. I'll be waiting to hear from you, girls. ROXY.

Boys, you'll find Miami Q. congenial and understanding.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-three, five feet ten inches tall, with blue eyes and light-brown hair. I am considered very understanding and congenial. I would like to hear from Pals from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Of course, every one is welcome, and I promise to answer all letters.
MIAMI Q.

Her chief hobby is writing letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am an auburn-haired, blue-eyed girl of twenty, a junior at college, and my pet hobby is writing long letters. I would love to correspond with girls far and near, and will send a snapshot to the first five Pals who write to me.
JEANSHIRLEY.

Girls, get together with Bingee.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please print my plea in your Corner. I am a young Italian girl of nineteen, enjoy reading, hiking, and writing long, newsy letters. My hobby is collecting poems. I live in New York State, and can write lots of interesting things. Won't you Pals try me?
BINGEE.

Cantonette will appreciate your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a tall, slim blonde, eighteen years of age, enjoy dancing, reading, swimming, and drawing. I will be very glad to exchange snapshots with girls everywhere. My mother is dead, and I am the oldest girl at home. I keep house for the rest of the family, but have lots of time for writing letters. Won't some of you Pen Pals please write to me? I'll appreciate your letters. CANTONETTE.

Bern is a good sport.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm another lonesome young fellow looking for Pen Pals. I am nineteen years of age, considered a good sport, and enjoy receiving and writing letters. Come on, fellows, let's see what we have in common. I have plenty of time to answer every one of you. BERN.

A peppy young Minnesota Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Does any one want a peppy Pal who will answer all letters promptly, and who has lots of interesting things to talk about? I am a girl of eighteen, with brown hair and blue eyes. I like to read, am interested in music, sports, and especially swimming. I'm hoping to hear from true-blue Pals everywhere. Come on, girls, tell me all about yourselves. I live in Minneapolis. OWATONNA.

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An invitation for every one.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Chicago girl of nineteen, love to write letters, and promise prompt replies. I have golden-brown hair, brown eyes, and am crazy about dancing and swimming. Won't some one have pity on a lonely girl and drop her a line? Girls, please consider this as an invitation for every one of you.

CHI ANNIE.

Here's a Pal for you younger girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young Filipina girl of sixteen looking for Pen Pals. I am a senior at high school, crazy about movies, reading, painting, writing letters, swimming, dancing, and riding a bicycle. I want to hear from girls everywhere, regardless of age or nationality. Girls, won't you get busy and write to me?

TROPICAL STAR.

Six feet of friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I hope you will help me find a few Pen Pals. I am a young man twenty-two years of age, six feet tall, with brown, wavy hair and gray eyes. I enjoy all kinds of sports, and especially swimming. I want to hear from fellows everywhere, and promise to answer all letters promptly. Won't you fellows give me a break? I'm sure you won't regret writing to me. ZANG.

Who'll write to this lonely farmerette?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of twenty, and feel very friendless at this time because I have recently lost my best pal. I am living on a farm many miles from the city, but I manage to keep up with current events, as I am interested in every one and everything. Won't all you Pals, young and old, married and single, please let me be your friend? AVELLA.

She has a weakness for Western Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please, won't you make room for me? I am a girl of twenty, with a weakness for Western Pen Pals. Of course, I would like to receive letters from all over the world, so I hope the rest of you girls will not be discouraged. I'm fond of cooking, reading, and writing letters. I am also an enthusiastic movie fan, and collect pictures of screen stars. I will exchange snapshots. SARIE.

Let this Canadian Pal tell you about her travels.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am sending an S O S to Pals all over the world. I am a Jewish girl of twenty-eight, considered good-looking, enjoy all sports, and have traveled in the United States. At present my home is in Canada. Come on, all you Pals, and don't disappoint me. I am looking forward to receiving loads of letters. My friends call me ANNIE ROONEY.

Who'll write to this student of drama?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young man in my late twenties, a university graduate, interested in all worth-while things, and friendship in particular. I have studied drama at a famous school, traveled extensively, am broad-minded, congenial, and letter writing is my pet hobby. I would enjoy corresponding with Pals who are not girl-crazy. Come on, fellows, and drop me a line. BRIAN.

Two lonesome girls.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two girls fifteen and sixteen years of age. Because of poor health we both had to quit school, and now we get very lonesome. We would love to hear from girls who live in the good old West, but will answer all letters received, and hope girls from far and near will not hesitate to answer our plea.

LORRY AND ELLEN.

He's all alone in a big city.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young man of twenty-eight, and all alone in a big city. Needless to say, I am lonely, and would like to hear from young men of any age who appreciate real friendship. I enjoy the theater, literature, music, and sports. Won't some of you fellows take a chance and drop me a line? I'm sure you won't be disappointed. CINTI JACK.

Pals, help cheer up this lonely Maine Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's an S O S for Pen Pals everywhere. I am a girl of twenty-two, five feet five inches tall, enjoy sports, and love to dance. At present I am not working, and time hangs heavy on my hands. I will exchange snapshots, and hope to hear from girls all over the world. I promise to answer all letters received. I live in Maine. TWIN.

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She's a prompt correspondent.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would very much like to hear from Pen Pals everywhere. I am a girl of twenty-two, with black hair and eyes. I like to dance, swim, and play tennis. I promise to answer all letters on time, so won't some of you please write?

JESTER.

Let her tell you about her wedding plans.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a blue-eyed stenographer of twenty-two, interested in baseball, basket ball, hockey, polo, and all other outdoor sports. I also enjoy reading, movies, and music. I am engaged, and expect to be married in the fall. I promise to answer all letters as interestingly as I can.

PATSYRUTH.

A peppy high-school senior.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of seventeen, considered good-looking, and easy to get along with. My favorite sports are hiking, horseback riding, swimming, dancing, and I like plenty of fun. I'm a peppy, lively high-school senior. Come on, girls, and let me hear from you. I will exchange snapshots.

DIMPLES OF TENNESSEE.

All you older readers, write to Kingsville Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am sure there are many older readers who are looking for Pen Pals. I am a woman of forty-three, fond of pets, trees, flowers, and camping, and would very much enjoy corresponding with Pals around my age or older. Won't some of you please write? Prompt replies are guaranteed.

KINGSVILLE PAL.

Let him tell you about his stage experiences.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would appreciate it if you would help me find a few congenial Pen Pals. I'm a young man twenty years of age, interested in dancing, skating, and am not very fond of girls. I have had

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considerable stage experience, as I am a tap dancer. Fellows, please drop me a line. I'll answer all letters received. PERRY.

Ethyl lives near a large Canadian city.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have never had a Pen Pal, so won't some of you girls please write to this Canadian girl of nineteen? The town I live in is located on Lake Ontario, and isn't far from Toronto. I am interested in dancing, skating, swimming, and crazy about reading. I would be delighted to hear from girls far and near. ETHYL.

Life doesn't bore this Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May another lonely girl of twenty-one enter your Corner? I enjoy all sports, and get a real thrill out of just being alive. I have black hair, blue eyes, and a happy disposition. I like to make friends, go to parties, and always manage to enjoy myself. I'll answer all letters, and hope to hear from every Pal who reads my plea. OLA MAE.

A radio, opera, and movie fan.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't some one please take notice of my plea for Pen Pals and write to me? I am a peppy girl of seventeen, and the fact that I live in the city does not prevent me from being lonesome. I am crazy about receiving and writing letters, and my other hobbies are reading, radio, movies, and the opera. I promise faithfully to answer all letters received. ANXIOUS ALYCE.

Boys, here's a real Pal for you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a young man of twenty-four, and greatly interested in music and literature. I am all alone in a strange city, and completely without friends. I'll gladly exchange snapshots, as photography is one of the hobbies I really enjoy. Won't some of you fellows please write? I'll surely answer. N. C. L.

This Pal enjoys mystery stories.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a lonely girl of twenty-two, enjoy movies, mystery stories, and love to write long letters. I would especially like to correspond with girls who live in the West, but every one is welcome, and I'll answer all letters received. I will also exchange snapshots and picture post cards. Girls, please don't pass me by. ETTEN.

Three Pals at a throw.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are three happy-go-lucky girls between seventeen and twenty years of age, interested in sports, especially dancing and swimming. We would love to correspond with Pals who live in the South, and those who hail from California, although we promise to answer all letters, and will exchange snapshots. Come on, girls; let's get acquainted!

JERRIE, TONIE, AND TERRIE.

Write to her about your beauty problems.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please publish my plea for Pen Pals. I am a lively girl of twenty-two, live in Canada, and own a beauty shop. I have traveled quite a bit, and can promise some very interesting letters. I would like to hear from Pals everywhere, and especially from California. Girls, won't you try me? DOCTOR ANN.

This Pal is musically inclined.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man in my early twenties, enjoy books, shows, dancing, and music. I would appreciate hearing from Pals between twenty and thirty years of age. I am living in South Carolina, and hope to visit New York this summer. Won't some of you fellows everywhere drop me a few lines? Prompt replies are guaranteed. NATE.

Dobby is good-natured and friendly.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's another good-natured and friendly Pen Pal of eighteen with lots of time on her hands. Won't some of you girls please write to me? I like sports, dancing, and although I do not attend college, most of my friends do. I would like to hear from Pals between eighteen and twenty-five. No matter where you live, girls, I promise speedy replies.

DOBBY.

Hoping is ambitious for a movie career.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely girl of seventeen, enjoy sports, dancing, movies, and making friends. I'm a junior at high school, and greatly interested in the production of moving pictures. In fact, I have high hopes of becoming a movie actress some day. I will be glad to exchange snapshots, and guarantee an answer to every letter received. HOPING.

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Girls, Blue-eyed Mary will appreciate your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a lonely girl of twenty-two, five feet two inches tall, have blue eyes, and a jolly disposition. I like outdoor sports, making friends, and promise faithfully to answer all letters received. I will gladly exchange snapshots, and hope to hear from girls far and near, and of any age. I live in Philadelphia.

BLUE-EYED MARY.

No matter what your interests, boys, you'll find Vick a congenial Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young fellow of almost twenty, interested in many things, but specialize in aviation, amateur photography, and movies. I like writing letters, and hope to hear from boys far and near, regardless of their hobbies. I'll exchange snapshots, and promise to answer all letters received. Boys, here's hoping I'll hear from all of you soon. VICK.

She gets a lot of fun out of life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am looking for single Pen Pals between seventeen and twenty-one years of age. I am a girl of eighteen, have recently graduated from high school, like to read, write, dance, sing, and usually manage to get a lot of fun out of life. I have a few hobbies, but my favorite one is to write and receive long, chummy letters. So come on, all you gals everywhere, and send me a letter. I live in the old Bay State, Massachusetts.

MANYA.

A brother and sister.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We would like to join your Corner and get many Pen Pals from everywhere. We are a brother and sister, age seventeen and nineteen, live in New Jersey, and like to write letters. We enjoy dancing, outdoor sports, and will gladly exchange photographs and snapshots. Come on, boys and girls, and let's get together. We'll be waiting to hear from you.

MARGE AND MARTIN.

From the land of bagpipes and kilts.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I can't tell you how wonderful it would be for me if I could correspond with Pen Pals everywhere. I'm a girl of almost sixteen, live in Scotland, am fond of sports, dancing, music, and like fun and gayety. I am especially keen about swimming and skating. I have blue eyes, light hair, and am considered a good sport. I will answer all letters.

NAN OF GREENOCK.

He wants to tell you about his travels.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: It has always been my ambition to write to Pals far and near. I have traveled some, and intend to travel some more, so perhaps I would be an interesting correspondent. I'm a young man of twenty-three, and easy to get along with. I have lots of time for writing letters, and hope many of you Pals will not hesitate to let me hear from you. STEVENS.

She's looking for something to fill her time.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a very lonesome girl of sixteen. I hardly know what to do with my time, now that I no longer go to school. I would certainly appreciate hearing from girls everywhere, and promise to answer all letters. I am a tall blonde, love music, horseback riding, ball games, and reading. I am also fond of pets, and especially cats. Please write to me, some one. BELLA.

Ohio Floyd is not a ladies' man.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Could you find space in your Corner for my letter? I would like to hear from young men everywhere, regardless of age. I'm a young fellow of twenty-one, not exactly a ladies' man, can play the piano, and my favorite hobby is composing music. I guarantee an answer to every letter, so won't some of you fellows write to me? I'm sure you won't find your time wasted. OHIO FLOYD.

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THE FRIEND IN NEED

Department Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown

Well-known Authority on Love and Marriage

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

THERE are many likable young young men with adequate incomes who could take romance seriously and make the girl they marry happy. But it would seem that these light-hearted young men prefer the flashy type of girl, and apparently ignore the home-loving, quiet girl who would make an ideal wife.

A girl would have to have plenty of courage to marry a man who considers existence a giddy round of good times, and who does not realize that life and love have a finer, deeper meaning, far more important than any light-hearted gayeties of the moment.

Roberta is in love with one of these flighty young men, and wonders whether any girl has a chance to be happy with a playboy.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of twenty-one, well educated, and although my father has a good business, I have a job as assistant to an interior decorator. I like to be busy and feel a little useful.

I am considered fairly good-looking, enjoy good times, sports, and have many friends. I suppose I ought to be quite happy, but the truth is that I am miserable.

You see, I'm in love with a young man of twenty-five who is of the irresponsible, playboy type. He comes from a good family, has always had enough money to do as he liked, and is quite handsome.

Like many young men of his type, he is never serious. The more girl friends he dates, the merrier. Most of them are giddy flappers who should know better than to fritter their time away on a young fellow who will never offer them marriage.

About five months ago he went on a wild ride in his car. There were three fellows and four girls in the party. Evidently they had had too much liquid cheer, and they had a smashed car before they knew it. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt. Since then Phil has quieted down somewhat, and promised to really behave.

We have been dating steady twice a week for about two months. My parents like him a lot, and as for me, I'm desperately in love with him. But how can a girl trust a boy like that? And if marriage does come along, would he stay put? It's hard for me to believe that an easy-going, lively young man like Phil is likely to really settle down.

I have often entertained the thought that as soon as this last escapade of his is forgotten, he will start chasing other girls again. Do you think I could trust him to be true to me?

I wonder if other readers have had a

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problem like mine? And if so, I would more than appreciate it if they would write in and tell me what they would do if they were in my place.

Phil has asked me to marry him at the end of the year, but as yet I have not promised because I think it will do him good to be kept guessing. We are wonderful friends, and get along fine. My parents say it's up to me. ROBERTA.

When it comes to marriage, my dear, one can never actually predict what the future will bring. However, a girl can tell fairly well what stuff the young man is made of from close association with him and his family.

Many a young man with plenty of spending money and very little restraint is apt to go in for more freedom than is good for him. But it is not proof that he can never settle down and make a dependable husband. On the other hand, there are young men who are apparently unable to take life and love seriously. They are always in a rush and think they are having a wonderful time, although the fact is that they seldom find real happiness.

If you and Phil really love each other, you might give him the benefit of the doubt, and a year or so in which to prove that he means to keep his word about settling down. By the end of that time you should be reasonably sure whether Phil has a wabbly backbone, or if he can be relied upon.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of eighteen, and have been going with a young man for almost two years. He tells me that he cares for me deeply, and always insists on talking about the things we will do after we are married.

However, I cannot say that I care for him in any other way except as a friend. I have thought of married life with him, and find that I would not be at all happy. I know I can never learn to love him.

I have tried many times to break with him, but he always puts me off, saying that a girl of eighteen is too young to know what she wants, and that I would be sorry if I ever broke with him.

But I don't think he is right. I know that if I were in love with him I would be happy when we are together.

Perhaps you will think I am young and silly, but this boy and I are so different from each other. He has lived in the city only about five years, and doesn't like it much. He sees absolutely no sense in dancing, parties, and other ways of enjoying oneself. It seems I like all the things he doesn't care for.

Please advise me what to do. Don't you think I should drop him and have a chance to meet other young men, and find a boy I could love? ALICIA.

You may be young, dear, but hardly silly. It is easy to understand that any young man in love would not like the idea of giving up the girl in question. But surely he cannot be so blind as to refuse to realize that one-sided loves bring only unhappiness, and that sooner or later a break is inevitable?

I'm sure we sympathize with him; but at the same time, it seems pointless on his part to try to force himself upon you, when the whole thing causes you so much distress. Try again, and this time be more firm. Tell him kindly but definitely that you are sure you cannot return his affection, and that it would be for his own good for you to part. If he should wish to see you sometimes as a friend, it will be up to him.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty years old. I married a little over two years ago. My husband is not quite three years older than I. During the time we were going together we never went many places. Since we have been married it is more or less the same way.

Sometimes one would think my husband was forty, the way he wants to stay home nights. Sunday is about the only day we go anywhere.

My husband doesn't care for shows, dancing, or any kind of sports, except hunting. I never go with him then because he always takes a group of men along.

I enjoy shows, dancing, and all kinds of sports, especially swimming and horseback

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riding. My husband seems to think these things are rather foolish, though I don't see why. I knew before we were married that he cared very little for the things I like, but hardly thought about it.

Then there is another problem which I have tried to combat. If we are out riding with another couple, and are having a good time, it generally ends up with my husband's getting drunk, and spoiling what little fun I manage to have. I have tried drinking with him, thinking maybe he wouldn't drink so much, but it only made matters worse.

He makes a good salary, and we have a car. We could afford to have a good time together and be fine companions if he would only be more agreeable. I love him dearly, and he is as good to me as any husband can be in other ways than those I mentioned.

Mrs. Brown, is there any way I could get him to take me out more and enjoy the things I do? I have tried everything I know, even to talking it over with him, but it doesn't seem to do any good. I know he loves me, but I don't understand why he can't quit drinking and be a real companion.

I will appreciate any suggestion you make. UNHAPPY WIFE.

Being married to a man who does not care for any of the simple pleasures his wife enjoys would be hard on any woman. It would seem only logical to suppose that if your husband loves you, and knows his drinking makes you so unhappy, an appeal to the affectionate side of his nature would encourage him to be more moderate.

To be fair, of course, you must consider the fact that he is good to you in other ways, as you say. Wouldn't it be possible for you to enjoy with a girl friend some of the sports you like? And although your husband dislikes dancing, it ought not to be difficult for you to arrange informal parties at your home every now and then, and dance to your heart's content.

Every husband should make an effort to join in at least some of the social activities his wife enjoys, if the marriage is to be a happy one. Husbands should avoid making it necessary for their wives to coax and flatter them into doing things.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: When I was fifteen years old, I was obliged to plan my wedding rather hurriedly. My husband was five years older than I, but we were very much in love with each other.

My mother was dead, and until I got married I kept house for my father. However, my husband's parents wanted us to live with them, and although I didn't want to, I gave in. At that time my mother-in-law was running a rooming house.

Before I was married, my husband's mother seemed to like me, and wanted me to go with her son against my father's wishes. Like a foolish child I didn't listen to him.

After I was married, my mother-in-law treated me very well. But when my baby was two months old she changed; she couldn't be mean enough. She wanted to show me what to do and what not to do about the baby, saying I was too young to know anything.

Then she started nagging me constantly, insulted me in front of friends, and even told the girls who helped her with the housework to flirt with my husband to make me jealous. Every time she got my husband alone she'd tell him all sorts of lies about me.

We lived with her for three years, and then my husband and I moved away. Sometime afterward a friend of mine told me that before I married, my husband got one of his mother's hired girls into trouble, and that there was a child.

I knew this girl, because she was still with my mother-in-law when I got married. I asked my husband about this, and he said it was all a lie, and that he knew nothing about it. My mother-in-law just laughed and said somebody was trying to make trouble by telling lies.

Last Christmas, however, I found a letter belonging to my mother-in-law. It was from that girl, and she talked about her child in such a way that I knew my husband was the father.

When my husband came home I showed him the letter and he owned up and said it was true. But he said he never loved this girl, and didn't want me to find out the truth. He also said he couldn't prevent his folks going to see this girl and the baby.

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The next time my mother-in-law came to see me I told her just what I thought of her. I forbade my two children to go near her, as she used to take them to her house and talk to them about me. I told her never to step inside my door again.

I tried to be her friend, but she didn't want me. So I made up my mind not to care for her company; she doesn't seem to know what friendship is, anyway. She has caused me only heartache ever since I've known her.

As for my husband, he does not drink or smoke, and is trying to be a man. He tells me that he loves me, and that he had never really loved any other girl before, but I don't feel the same toward him.

I used to think there was no other man like him, until I found this out. I am only twenty-four now, and I hate to think that my marriage is spoiled.

Do you think I did right to refuse my mother-in-law to see my children? Every time she came she was looking for an argument, and meddling in my affairs.

MISERABLE BERTHA.

Whenever anything happens to disillusion us about some one we love, life and love never seem quite the same. But it does not mean that we must give up hope of ever finding a measure of happiness.

It is indeed regrettable when in-laws do not give two young people a free hand in working out their own marriage problems. Sometimes in-laws try to be helpful, but their desire to help seems to turn into defeat. And sooner or later other elements creep into a relationship that might otherwise have remained tolerable.

While it was not commendable on your husband's part to have evaded the responsibility of his former romance, the fact that it all happened before you met and married him should enable you to stay and give him another chance for your children's sakes.

No matter what the past may have been, if a man tries to play fair, he deserves an opportunity to prove that he is sincere.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am desperately in need of a friend's advice, and as I have no mother to turn to, I hope you will help me.

I can't remember any real happiness in life until a short while ago. I am twenty. At sixteen I married, not for love, but to be independent. But my marriage lasted only three months, and then I was a divorcee.

A year later I married again, but I only spent seven dreadfully unhappy months with a man any woman could have. It ended up by his beating me to the extent of putting me in the hospital, where I stayed for almost four months. Of course, I sued for divorce when I got out.

By this time I was heartsick, disappointed, and life seemed a failure. However, three months after my second divorce I met an old school chum of mine, and a week later we were married.

For six weeks we were divinely happy. Then I was rushed to the hospital for an emergency operation. While I was ill, my husband met a woman, let her drive my car, and gave her a valuable diamond ring that belonged to me.

Several weeks after I came home I caught them in my car. However, I wanted to make a success of the marriage and did not try to cause trouble. A month later my husband took the money I had to pay the hospital bill. My grandfather had given me this money, as my husband was out of work. I later found out he'd lost his job because he had stolen money where he worked. Once more I was granted a divorce.

For the past eight months I have lived alone without faith in the future. Have I been the cause of all my failures? I hardly think so.

Here is my present problem. Just before Christmas I met a very charming chap. He's only a year older than I. We were constantly together for ten days, then he returned to his job in another city. I visited him for five days and have just returned. However, my mind is in a turmoil.

I am deeply in love for the first time, and have dropped all other friends since I first met this man. But he has heard considerable talk about my past. There's always some one to make my story a bigger one than it really is. Now he is very suspicious and jealous of me.

He has told me he could really love me, if he dared. But he doesn't want to be hurt, and he doesn't completely trust me.

If he only knew the heartaches and un-

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happiness I have been through since I was sixteen, he'd know I'd never hurt any one, regardless of how little they meant to me. Least of all the man who has made me want to make something of myself.

He has given me a new hope, yet he breaks it down at times with an outburst of uncontrollable temper. Although he hurts me very deeply, I love him so terribly much I forgive him immediately.

How can I explain my unhappy past to him in such a way that he will be convinced I am really in love with him, and that I am willing to live on what he can offer me?

We have decided to wait, but I can't stand this separation and his doubts when we are apart. I am true to him, and have no thought for any other man.

Won't you please try to help a girl who thinks she has had more than her share of hard knocks? ERMINE.

It is hard to understand why it should take any effort at all to convince your friend that you are really in love with him. Surely, having been married and divorced more than once in search of happiness should not be held against you.

I would suggest that you resume your former friendships, or make new friends, and do not cut yourself off from the companionship of other people. It is always a mistake for any woman to drop every one simply because she has at last met the one man.

Perhaps if your friend could not feel so sure of you, he would be less indifferent. There is no necessity for you to apologize to him for your previous marriages. If he really loves you, the past shouldn't matter.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: This is an answer to Socrates, who has such a biased opinion of girls. I hope you will find room to print it, as it is meant for Blue Barney, too.

The things I'd like to say to you, Socrates, wouldn't look at all well on paper. But of all the conceited boneheads you take the prize. Who do you think you are, giving out an opinion like that of all girls, just because you have met a couple who are out for a good time and nothing else?

There are plenty of girls who don't go in for petting and drinking at all, and those who go in for excessive drinking and smoking are very much in the minority. If you had sense enough to look in the right places, you'd find your ideal. Of course, you won't find her at the wild parties you speak of, cheap taverns, and places of questionable reputation. How could you? Certainly no girl who has any self-respect is going to be found in such places.

And there are very few girls whom you will find sitting at home by the fire knitting socks for grandpa. All girls want to have a good time, naturally, but not the way you seem to think they do. There is much enjoyment in taking long walks through the country, going to movies and dances, and even sitting at home nights with a fellow who enjoys a friendly conversation.

Personally, I think boys are to be blamed for what some girls are. Boys don't care a hang about a girl as long as they have a good time. If a boy takes a girl out and she doesn't consent to go to some dark spot to park and submit to his kissing and mauling, she is considered a "flat tire." Frankly, I prefer being called a "flat tire."

With ideas like yours, you're nothing less than a simpleton. I could write a lot more in this letter, but I want it to be published.

A CONNECTICUT STENOGRAPHER.

After reading a letter like the above, there seems to be little doubt that some young men get off on the wrong foot because of their egotism. Necking and petting may have been yesterday's fun. But girls of to-day possess a goodly amount of common sense and the determination to stick to high ideals, in spite of the fact that they are going places and doing things.

And here's another:

DEAR MRS. BROWN: If I were as narrow-minded as Socrates and Blue Barney, I might make an equally vicious statement about the conduct of most men. However, living in a big city has made me broad-minded enough to know that there are as decent men and women to-day as in our mothers' days. I say that sincerely, although I've seen some very poor examples.

I am a girl of twenty, and live in Chicago. I am considered very good-looking and have a pleasing personality. I am also sensible and practical. But I must con-

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fess that I have had my share of unwelcome attentions from men who should have known better.

I'm a high-school graduate, and because of poor business conditions I lost my job as secretary and had to take the first job that came along. That was as waitress beyond city limits in a so-called respectable tavern.

In comparison to my previous knowledge of life, I learned the cruder facts of human nature. The people I met were of the wrong kind, and I soon became disillusioned. I distrusted all men.

I lost faith so completely that when friends called to take me out, I preferred to stay home and read.

Fortunately, I told my troubles to an old friend. He said I had no reason to feel that way, because I was merely an onlooker, while those fools openly petted in smoke-filled rooms and drank bad whisky.

He advised me to get a job in a different place, pick my friends more carefully, and especially stop being alone so much and avoiding all men friends.

I followed his advice. At first, I found that all boys expected you to smoke, drink and neck until all hours.

However, I discarded those friends and tried to find others.

Right now my ideals are normal again. I have met many decent young men and have many good times without cause for complaint.

My advice to Socrates is to stop being a crab and look for friends elsewhere. If he is really as nice a young man as he says, it shouldn't be hard for him to meet nice people, and interest himself in some equally nice girl.

I know that from now on I will continue to look for a man who comes up to my standards, and I hope I have the patience, because I've met many poor examples. When I have no place to go, I sew or knit and try my hand at the things that make a girl a successful housekeeper.

Girls, do you think it's foolish of me to wait and hope that some day I will find the right man? I'd like to hear from any one who reads this letter. I really think there are many good men left. Am I wrong?

BABS.

I am sure you are not wrong in your belief that there are many good men left. And I agree with you that it isn't fair to judge every one by the shortcomings of a few. Perhaps after reading these two letters, Socrates and Blue Barney will take time to think things over.

However, here is a young man who agrees with Socrates that nice girls are almost nonexistent.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I don't know whether this letter will ever find its way into print. But after reading Socrates's letter I would certainly like to shake hands with a real man.

I agree with him that girls these days are "nothing but playthings who revel in petting and kisses; drink, paint, and smoke like a chimney." None of them have any common sense. Every girl I have ever dated drank, smoked, and having a good time was her special interest. If she met a fellow who could spend more on her than her current boy friend, all the better, and the old friend was given the well-known air without so much as a "thank you."

Socrates said that if a fellow isn't what the girls call a good sport, and if he doesn't join in drinking like the others, he is seldom asked anywhere. His deductions are certainly correct.

I don't care for liquor. I could never see what fun people could have when they were tight and couldn't see straight. As for easy kisses, there's no glamour when a girl kisses every fellow who takes her out. But that seems to be what the girls want.

Girls also complain that boys get "fresh" and forget to behave like gentlemen. Girls may complain, but they fall for a fellow just the same, if only to add another "scalp" to their list.

Maybe you'll say I feel this way because I haven't met the "only girl." I've met lots of girls, but couldn't fall in love with any of them, because I saw nothing to fall in love with. I really don't believe there are any honest-to-goodness girls, and the boys I know think the same.

I'm twenty-three, have had two years of college, and am now working in a contractor's office. I'm considered good-looking, and have been told I have a likable personality. So I don't think that the reason I haven't found the right girl is because I'm not presentable.

Another thing that jars me is that girls lack loyalty. They are pals when a fellow can take them places, but when he's broke —well, that's his hard luck, and they openly admit there are plenty of other fellows who don't have to economize.

I have heard of only one case where the

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girl remained engaged to the fellow after he'd lost his job and had to get on his feet again. Call that loyalty, when a girl can't stick to a man because he's down?

So there you are, girls. You're always complaining about the boys. But I'm at a loss as to how a fellow can find a decent girl; a girl who has one or two old-fashioned ideas left, and who would really be interested in home-making rather than all-night parties. BUSBEE.

I believe I'll just sit back and let you girls tell Busbee how he may find his heart's desire. How about it, family?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Perhaps my problem may seem trivial to you, but I would like to have your advice. Our home was broken up by divorce, and I went to live with my father, until two years ago when I went to stay with my mother.

Since the divorce, mother has been very bitter, and now she doesn't want me to go out with any boy who is at all serious about me. There is one boy four years my senior. I am twenty. He says he loves me, and I am sure I love him; but mother thinks I couldn't be happy with him because he is too quiet. He doesn't care for dances, parties, or even card games. But I don't really mind.

I was in love once before, but the boy disappointed me terribly, and now I can't seem to trust this young man as I probably should when he tells me how much he cares.

Sometimes I imagine that it won't last, or that he will get tired of me. However, at other times I think he is old enough to know his own mind. He had had other girl friends before I started going with him.

He wants me to marry him at the end of the year. But I really don't see how I can marry him, feeling as I do. Besides, my mother wants me to go out with other boys and forget him. She thinks we are not well enough suited to each other.

Of course, I don't want to break with him. Do you think we could be happy together? If we couldn't, then I might as well give him up now instead of letting him think that I'll marry him.

UNCERTAIN MARION.

There is only one thing to do if you are not certain of your feelings for this boy, and that is not to think of anything as serious as marriage. At least, not now.

No doubt your mother means well, and, understanding life so much better than you do, dear, she is probably right in saying that if you and this boy have such different likes and dislikes there would be friction. However, just because your mother's marriage ended so unhappily, it does not mean that yours will not work out.

Give yourself more time to think it over, and don't hesitate to have other friends. If you can make your friend understand that you want to be fair, and have his happiness at heart as much as your own, he may not resent the fact that you are so undecided.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: For the past six months I have been in love with a girl who lives in the same house. I have been out with her quite a lot, and have told her I am in love with her. However, although she likes me, and likes to go out with me, she tells me frankly that she is not in love with me.

I'm quite heartbroken about the whole thing. Although she says she doesn't love me, she leads me to think that she does. Her father doesn't like me because I have a quick temper, and I can't go to this girl's home. As we live in the same house, however, it's easy for us to see each other.

I am twenty-one, and she is sixteen. She's a fine, sensible girl, and always the life of the party when we are out together. I know I can never love another girl as I love her, and I doubt whether I can be happy without her. She seems to be quite grown up.

She admits she is fond of me, but that it isn't love, and has suggested that we wait two or three years to see how things turn out. Do you think that would be a good idea? I'm afraid that if we wait she may fall for some other fellow later on. Should I ask her not to go with other boys?

Won't you please advise me and tell me what you think would be best for us to do? I know I will never be really happy unless she marries me. WILLY OF OHIO.

I can well understand how discouraged you feel, but where love and marriage are concerned, it is

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only natural for a girl to hesitate when she is in doubt about her own feelings.

However, you need not lose all hope that this girl will ever consider you seriously. And waiting two or three years is as sound and sensible a suggestion as any one could offer in a problem of this kind. By the end of that time you will both know how you stand in each other's regard.

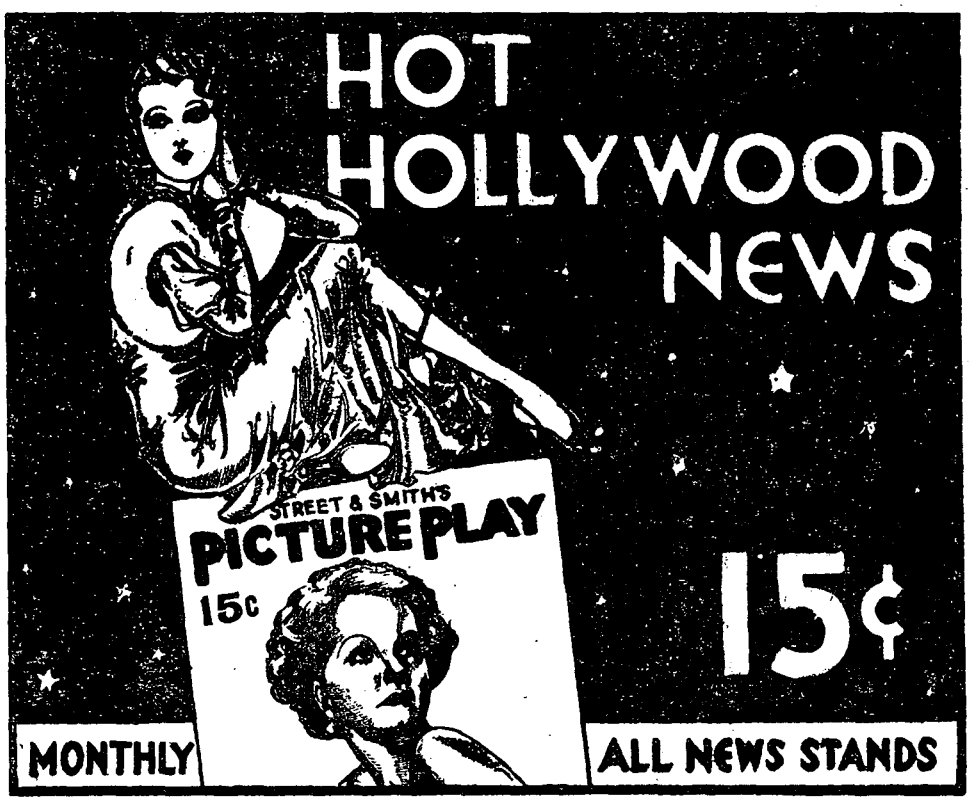
But holding a girl back from other friendships would show selfishness on your part, my boy, and it would not prevent her from falling in love with some one else. If you two decide to wait, I'm sure you will find that a girl seldom turns down a young man who proves himself a generous, sympathetic, and devoted friend.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: A year ago I met a boy who was a night-club entertainer. I can't say it was love at first sight, because he seemed too much of a flirt. He knew my sister and her husband, and he came to our table for a drink.

Ronny and I had a friendly chat, and before we left he said he would like to know me better. I told him I lived in another town, and that I was going home in a couple of days. And although he coaxed me, I refused to give him my address, in spite of the fact that I knew he could easily get it from either my sister or brother-in-law.

Two weeks later my sister and her husband came to see us, and I had the surprise of my life when I saw Ronny with them. He stayed more than a week, and before he left we announced our engagement.

He wrote to me every day, and I was the happiest girl in the world until I discovered that I was to become a mother. All my castles tumbled. I wrote to Ronny and said we ought to be married at once, but he didn't even answer my letter. I



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almost lost my mind when I realized that all my love was just a passing fancy to him.

Of course, I couldn't let my folks know what had happened, so I went to stay with my sister. She lived in the same town as Ronny's mother and his older brother, Murray. My sister said I ought to tell Ronny's mother how he had treated me, but I couldn't do it, especially as I really liked her. She is a fine woman.

Ronny's mother and I talked about the engagement, but I didn't have the heart to tell her that I no longer heard from Ronny, or that he was responsible for making my life so miserable. She wanted me to come to see her often.

The next time I went to see her, I met Ronny's brother, Murray. We talked about different things, including my coming marriage to Ronny. On the way home Murray told me that he knew why I was so blue, because the last time he saw Ronny he heard the whole miserable story. He said that Ronny didn't want to marry me or any girl because it would spoil his career.

I can't tell you how that hurt me. I sent back Ronny's ring and said he could go right ahead with his career, and that we were through for good.

I met Murray again and he was very sweet. He wanted to come to see me and take me out, and I was glad to have a friend. We became good friends.

One day I was cleaning house, and fell from a ladder. I had to go to the hospital. My baby was born dead. When I realized what had happened, all my feeling for Ronny died, too.

When I was well again Murray began coming to see me regularly. But I couldn't stay with my sister forever, and when I told him that I was going home soon, he took me in his arms and asked me to marry him.

I began to feel alive again. Murray was very good to me, and what girl doesn't appreciate kindness when she is in trouble?

However, although I love Murray more than I ever loved Ronny, he said that he probably didn't have the right to ask me to marry him since I was in love with his brother.

Of course, when I told him how I felt, it was different. But do you think that I should marry him, knowing about Ronny and me? Do you think he would throw it up to me later on?

I'm only nineteen, and Murray is twenty-five. I want to marry him and live happily, but under the circumstances I'm afraid to take such a serious step. Your opinion will be greatly appreciated.

DOWNHEARTED.

There is no reason in the world why you and Murray couldn't be happy together, unless, of course, you believe that he is the type of man who might indulge in the unpleasant habit of bringing up the past whenever something happened to upset domestic peace. Knowing him as well as you do, you should be able to determine this fact better than any one else.

A man must be indeed generous and understanding to really disregard the past and be interested only in the future. Many men appear to be unable to reach this point of forgetfulness, while there are some who never stir the dead ashes of the past.

Why not give yourself a little more time to study Murray? It is better to take your time, my dear, than to rush into a situation which may bring you more grief. If your friend *can* close the door to the past, you two could probably be very happy together.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: About five years ago I met a young man and have been in love with him ever since. He has often told me that he loves me better than any one in the world.

My parents, however, wouldn't allow me to go with him. But I slipped out to meet him whenever I could, and they never knew. He is now twenty-five, and I am eighteen. My parents say I am not old enough to be sure he's the right man for me to marry, and they are sure he isn't.

In order to please them, I tried to become interested in other boys, but every time I met Jack, I'd forget the others. He seemed to feel the same way about me, and would beg me to stop going with other boys and go out with him only.

I usually did, though we continued to see each other secretly. Then some one told my father that I was meeting Jack, and he made me promise not to see him again.

I began keeping company with a cer-

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tain boy in the neighborhood whom Jack asked me not to go with, but I thought that it would be a good way to forget him.

Jack began going with another girl and drank more than ever. He was in the habit of drinking, though not to excess. That is one reason why my father objects to Jack.

I continued going with this other boy, Bill, for a few months. Then I met Jack again, and he begged me to drop Bill. Loving Jack as I did, I agreed. I tried to get my father to let me go with Jack, but he refused. So again I had to give Jack up.

Time passed, and though I still loved Jack, I was lonesome and blue. I had to have some fun, so dad let me go with Bill. But whenever I happened to meet Jack, he always begged me not to go out with any one else.

During all this time Jack had only a few dates with other girls, but he didn't stop drinking. When I begged him to do so, he said he'd stop "some day."

Then I found a job away from home. It gave me a chance to see Jack often, and we could go out without being watched. We were very happy, but some one tattled, and my father told me that if I didn't quit seeing Jack he would make me give up my job and come home.

Jack was working at that time, so we decided to get married, then no one could separate us. We even decided on the wedding date. But as it drew nearer, Jack heard that he was going to be laid off. And as my job was not going to last much longer, we thought that it would be better to wait until we were financially prepared for marriage.

He didn't stop drinking, but kept promising me that he would after we were married. Dad wouldn't agree for us to go together, so Jack said, "What good will it do me to quit drinking? I love you so much that life isn't worth living without you."

Then I was laid off and went home. One night Jack was drunk and did something that humiliated me terribly. I decided that he would never stop drinking and that I might just as well give him up.

We have not had a date for more than two months, but I can't forget him. I love him, and I know I'll never stop loving him. I have been out with Bill again, but there seems to be no solution to my problem.

The other day I saw Jack again, and he promised to stop drinking. He said he hadn't had a drink for a week, and tells every one that he has stopped drinking. He wants me to make up, and plan for us to be together always.

What should I do? If I marry him I will break my parents' hearts. If I don't, my own heart will break. I can't live without him. ANNETTE OF MICHIGAN.

No problem is so hopeless that it cannot be worked out one way or another. But time and a strong desire to iron out difficulties are necessary in order to make the remedy effective.

In the first place, my dear, if your parents object to your going with Jack only because of his drinking, then it would seem reasonable to suppose that, if he loves you, he would be eager to give up liquor and make every effort to convince them he is worthy of your love.

Why not tell your parents that you would like to give Jack a year or so to make good, and that in the meantime you will have other friends, too? That solution, it seems to me, would be fair to every one concerned. It would give Jack an opportunity to turn over a new leaf, and show you he can be depended upon.

A man who is really in love will do everything within his power in order to overcome obstacles that prevent him from marrying the girl who has captured his heart.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a young sailor of twenty-one, and if you can give me some advice, I will certainly appreciate it.

Ever since I was sixteen I have found a great deal of satisfaction in traveling and being "on the go." I went to England on a tramp steamer at that age, and quit when I was seventeen. Then I joined the national guard for three years. After that I joined the navy, and I enjoy it as long as I can keep going.

Here's my problem: I am in love with a very sweet girl, and would like to devote the rest of my life to making her happy. However, how can I settle down to married life when I have no trade?

I am really and truly in love with this

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girl, but it seems rather hard to make people believe that a sailor can be a one-girl man. I still have a year and a half to serve. In the meantime, we are both planning for our future.

Another thing that worries me is this: Although I am in love and would like to settle down, at times I think I couldn't be happy because I would no longer be going places. I suppose you will understand and not be "thumbs down" on me.

I met this girl three years ago, and haven't thought of any one else since. She says that when my time is up we'll be married. Do you think we should, even if I have no job, although we could fall back on the little I have saved?

Maybe this doesn't sound like a problem. But I really have no one to ask for advice, and I feel sure you will offer some suggestion I can follow.

SMILING SAILOR.

Judging from your letter, it seems you have not shaken off the fascination of wanderlust enough to be completely happy if you settled down. On the other hand, if you really love this girl as you say, you may be so happy that you will lose all desire to be on the go.

The sensible and practical thing to do after you leave service would be to find what work you are best adapted to, and stick it out. While you are working you might be able to take a night course in some trade in which you are interested, so that you would be assured of a steady income when you married.

Give yourself more time, my boy, and be frank with your girl friend. Talk things over with her; she will not resent your taking her into your full confidence.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I met my husband when I was eighteen, and we were married shortly afterward. For a little over a year we were very happy. Then my husband was transferred to another town. But instead of taking me with him he left me at his mother's, telling me he would send for me as soon as he had found rooms.

But that very night he stopped at a hotel, and took a strange girl to a wild party. The next day he went to the town where he was going to work, and became friendly with a woman he met. They traveled around together for two weeks. He never sent me a cent.

Then he came to see me, and stayed three days. I was an expectant mother at the time. He said he couldn't find rooms, and that was why he didn't send for me. Although later I found out about this other woman, and that he had lied to me.

After he left I went to work, and when I had saved enough money to pay the fare, I went to him. The minute I saw him I knew that something was wrong. He said that as long as we couldn't have a home of our own, we might as well stop at a hotel. But I didn't like that.

I found work, rented a furnished room, and tried to take care of myself. He still lived with me as my husband. One night I happened to find a letter he had evidently dropped. It was from this second woman, and since I've read it I have been miserable.

Then my husband told me the whole story, said that he loved her, and that the sooner he could get his freedom the better.

My husband lost his job on her account. She went back to her own home State, but corresponded with my husband. I have some of her letters. I thought I would keep them, as they might prove good evidence when I sued for divorce. But I couldn't make up my mind what to do. I wanted my baby to have a father.

However, my husband became friendly with another woman and went away with her. By this time I knew I couldn't keep my job very long, so the law brought him back and put him in jail.

He promised to look after me, and begged me to drop the charges against him; I finally gave in. He said he still loved me, and was sorry about the past. He seemed so heartbroken over the whole thing, that I thought he was sincere. We left town and lived on some of the money I had saved up for my hospital bills.

We now have two children, but I feel as if I'd rather do anything than stay with my husband. Life is so hard, and marriage doesn't seem at all worth while. My husband is good to me, and as far as I know he hasn't tried to go with other women. He swears that what happened will never happen again. But I just can't believe him. Can I do anything to make my life happier? MRS. V. C. B.

It is a tragedy that marriage, which begins with every promise of

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success and happiness, should so often become a sorry mix-up. But although life is hard, and marriage may sometimes seem not at all worth while, it is our job to show at least a little courage. And where there are children, a special effort is required.

Hard as it is, and sometimes impossible, to rebuild broken trust, no marriage can last without patience, common sense, and self-sacrifice. Sacrifices made for those we love are never in vain, and sooner or later, in one way or another, loyalty and devotion begin to pay dividends.

So keep your chin up, my dear. Evidently your husband means to make good his promises. A little encouragement on your part will perhaps make the relationship still more agreeable. Try to forget the past. It will not be easy, I know; but you can make the future so much brighter not only for the children and your husband, but for yourself, too. Good luck!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Four years ago I met a man fifteen years my senior. I was eighteen then. He is very good-looking, and his folks are well-educated people. Bob makes a fine salary, but money seems to mean little to him, because he is the type of man who would give his last cent away to friends, if they needed his help.

Bob drinks and gambles, but I don't really object to this, because he never drinks to excess.

When we first met I didn't know much about him. But after going with him for three or four months, I found out that he also dated another girl. But it was too late for me. I was already deeply in love with him.

Bob and I have been everything to each other. He tells me that he could never forget me. I know he thinks a lot of me and would do anything I asked him.

When my father died a short time ago, Bob attended to most of the details, and he is always around whenever I need him. However, he cannot seem to forget this other girl.

I know she doesn't love him, because the only time she dates him is when she knows he can spend a lot of money. He takes her anywhere she wants to go. This girl is teaching school and is supporting her parents and a brother. Another thing is that if she ever marries she can never be a mother. And Bob loves children.

Bob knows I love him so much I would do anything in the world for him. The difference in our ages does not matter, because whenever I have been out with boys near my own age they seemed silly.

Bob is very proud that I love him as much as I do, even though others may say I love him not wisely but too well. He isn't the type that would talk about a girl. He is very popular, but doesn't seem to care whether he ever gets married or not.

I wish I knew what to do to make him think of marriage. Won't you please advise me? DOTTY.

To use an old axiom, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." I'm afraid, dear, that if your friend has felt no responsibility to marry you so far, it is very doubtful if he ever will. It is sad but true that in most cases of this kind, the girl is left holding the bag, while the man transfers his interest to some one else.

My most sincere advice to you, Dotty, is to drop this man at once and give yourself time to forget the entire incident. It will not be easy at first, but later on when you meet a man who will really deserve your love, you will be glad that you made a break.

Real love never thrives on things that must be hidden from the rest of the world. Real love is open and aboveboard, and is always altar-bound.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I married at the age of sixteen, after going steady for three years. For four years we were very happy, but my husband was in the habit of going out about twice a week. He said he had to go to club meetings, or out with the boys, and I didn't object.

Then my mother died, and about four weeks later a girl friend told me that she saw my husband at a dance with another girl. I asked him, and he denied it.

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I told my friend about it, and she said she had known for a long time that my husband was dating different women, but she just couldn't tell me because I was so wrapped up in him. As it often happens, by the time the wife finds out anything, every one else knows all about it.

He was always good to me, and never objected to getting me anything I wanted. One night I caught him talking to a girl on the street. He had told me earlier in the evening that he had to work that night.

Then my husband left town, and didn't tell me where he was going. This girl left the same day, although she came back in a week. My husband stayed away for almost three weeks. Then I received a letter from him in which he said that he still loved me, and would send for me, as he was thinking of staying in that town.

I didn't answer his letter, and when he came back, I made up with him for the baby's sake, and because I still loved him with all my heart. I think it's too bad that some of us can't help loving a man when we know he isn't worthy of our love.

My husband still goes out on the average of two nights a week, but I don't believe the excuses he offers. I can't seem to trust him any more. Girls sometimes call him up right here at home, and when he happens to be home, the minute he hears the girl's voice he hangs up and tells me there was no one on the line.

Do you think I should break with my husband? We have lived with my father ever since I was married, and I really would have no place to go. I have no brothers or sisters, and have never worked.

Although my father and my husband get along fairly well, my father wants me to leave my husband. He says he will take care of me and the baby. He is grieving over mother's death, and I won't have any one if he ever goes. He tries to comfort me by saying that if anything ever happens to him there will be enough left to take care of the baby and me.

Maybe all this sounds foolish, Mrs. Brown. But I just had to write and ask your opinion, and tell me what you think would be best for me to do. I'm really undecided about leaving my husband. I suppose I feel this way because I still care.

MARY DE L.

But don't you think, my dear, that it wouldn't be quite fair to saddle your father with the problem of taking care of you and the baby, when that is your husband's job?

It is heartbreaking, of course, when a husband disregards his wife's love and devotion. But it would not ease your heartache if you were to break with your husband, if you love him as you say you do.

It might help if you tried to reach a better understanding with him. His actions in the past were not at all commendable, of course. However, if you appeared to trust him, it might have a favorable effect, and, in time, you two could again find a satisfactory degree of happiness together.

You know, Mary, there is something in the old saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Try to make yourself more attractive and interesting, and a little mysterious. It will be more effective than showing openly how hurt you are, and how hard it is for you to believe in him.

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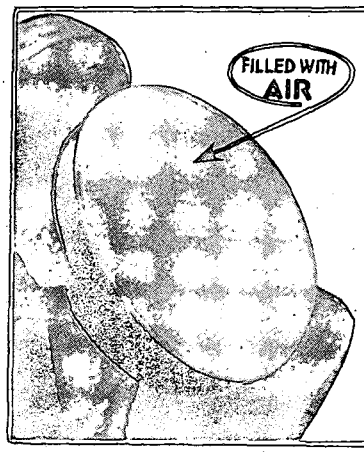

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